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A STUPID  
PEOPLE



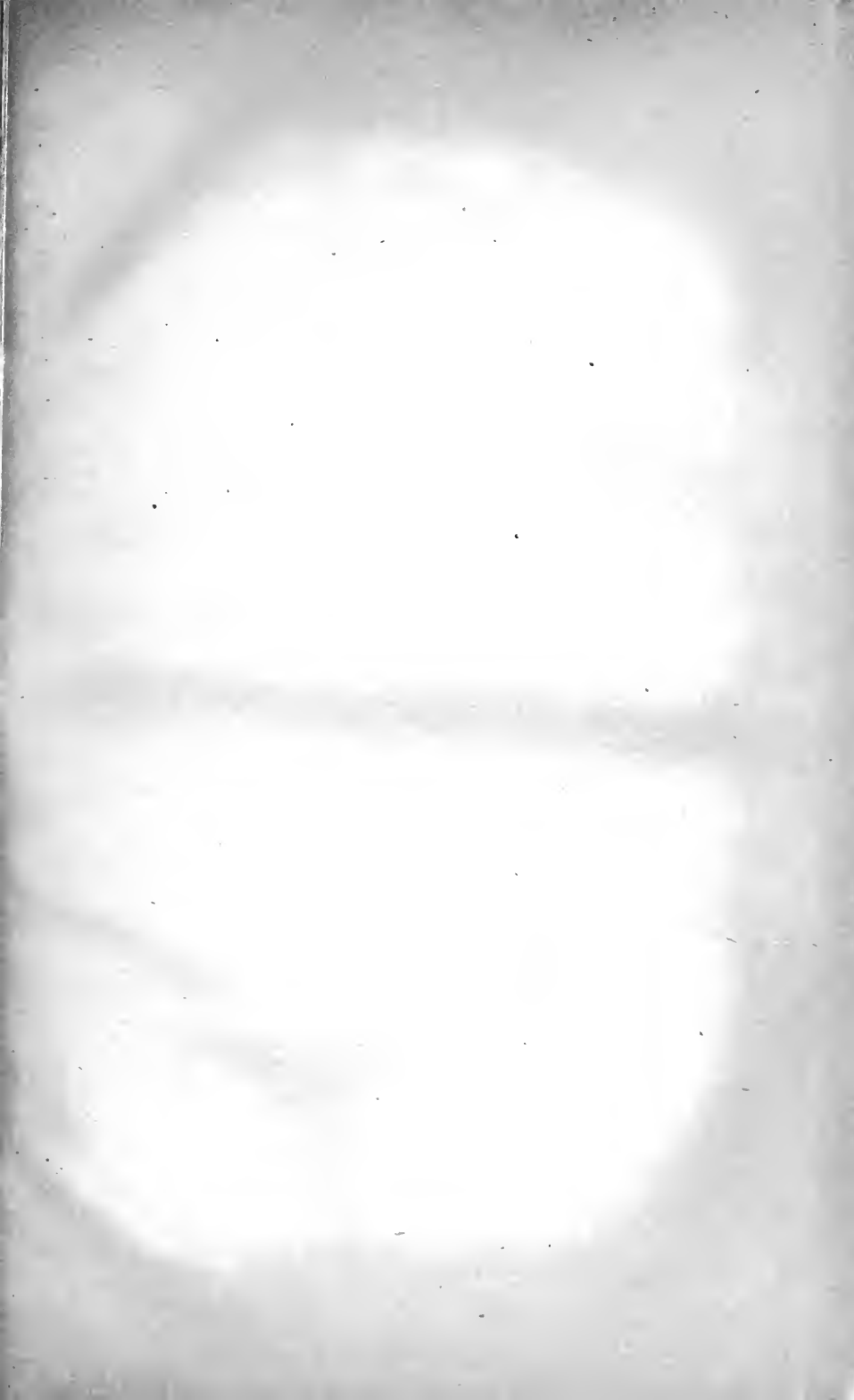
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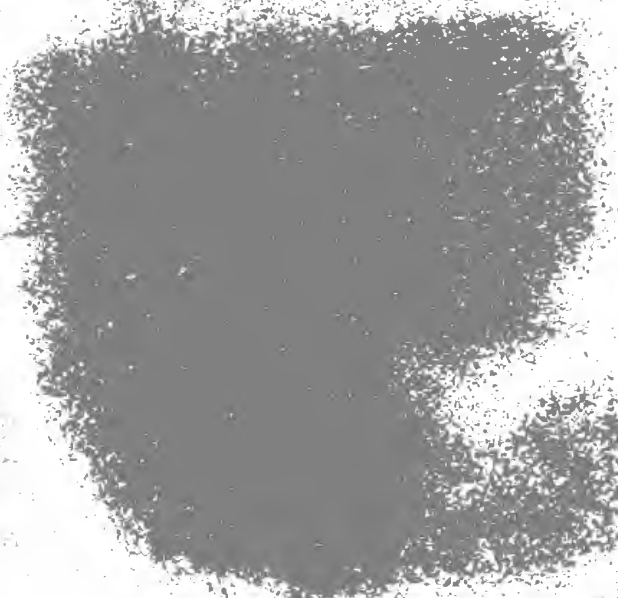
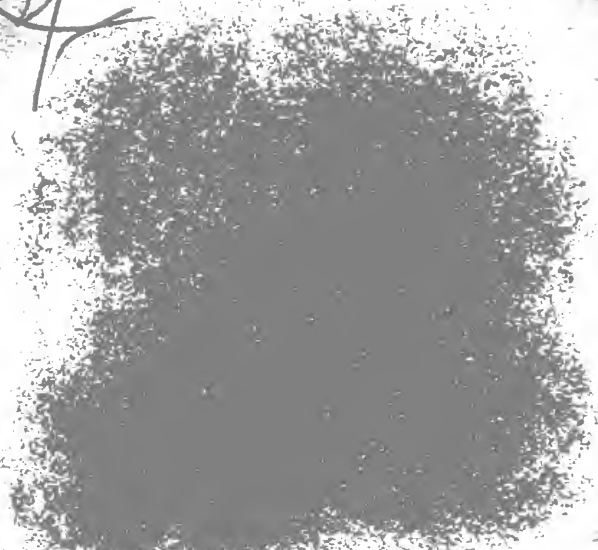
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ARE WE A STUPID PEOPLE ?

12/6

1908

*Magdalen Adelaide*

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# ARE WE A STUPID PEOPLE?

BY ONE OF THEM



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1908

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## PREFACE

I FEEL that a book so unconventional as this demands some preliminary explanation—if not some personal clues and hints—by way of credentials.

An American humorist, who by some oversight seems to have escaped a doctorate of laws from Oxford University, said that life usually consisted of three periods—the first twenty years of adult life was spent in throwing stones at a mark—the next twenty in looking where the stones have hit—and the next twenty in d——g the whole stone-throwing concern! That has not been my lot. The boot has been entirely on the other leg. Born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the heir to an ancient name and great estates, as well as two of the most noted seats in England, favours and honours were from my earliest years showered upon my reluctant head. At Oxford Dean Liddell publicly thanked me for having placed the name of Christchurch at the head of the modern languages list—a thing which it seemed had never been achieved before by that aristocratic, if easy-going, college. On coming to town, in my very first “season,” Cabinet Ministers, home and foreign, begged me to let them start me on the thorny path of politics. But, like Gallio, I cared nothing for these things. Entirely devoid of ambition, craving intensely to know the great world outside these western isles, but inspired with the deepest love and faith in the land of my birth, the social condition of England as it gradually unfolded itself before my astounded eyes in the streets of London and Liverpool, with its hideous inequalities, its callous selfishness, its unnumbered horrors—“Society”

(so called), with its heathenish sensuality, its vulgarity, its false pretensions, lying impostures and insincerity—whose members, instead of furnishing an example to those less endowed by fortune and education than themselves, seemed to take pride in reproducing the vices and the follies of the working classes in their idlest moods, without their excuse; while politics, which in my books I had learnt to regard as the art by which patriots sought to embellish and improve the lives and lot of their fellowmen—were apparently used to furnish a crowd of half-educated “scramblers” with an opportunity of gaining advertisement, rank and subsistence at the expense of the nation—these things, and much more, drove me at twenty-one to shake the dust of England from my feet, and register a vow to shun, as far as might be, intercourse with my fellow-countrymen and women for ever!

Thus, varying the order of the American humorist at twenty-one, I began life by d—g the whole social and political concern, and acquired a subjective certitude of the worthlessness and corruption of English society and politics. Doubting, however, the soundness of this precocious judgment, I resolved to test it by careful examination and comparison with the civil and social constitution of other nations.

At thirty I remained so steadfast in my opinions, that when my father, in 1875, was offered a peerage by the Government of Sir Stafford Northcote, and professed his readiness to accept it however personally disinclined to be enrolled in the ranks of the “Beerage,” if it would have the effect of keeping me in England and engaging me in politics, I replied that it was impossible to touch pitch and not be defiled, and that until England changed her skin, which did not seem likely, I should still continue to hope in another land to find a state of things which more nearly accorded with the reason and dignity of man than I had found at home.

After my father's death, having failed to persuade him to alter the succession to his estates in favour of my younger

brother, I took the earliest occasion to address my tenantry upon the evils of party government and the selfish egotism of both Political Parties. Their local representatives, who were present, instantly claimed me as a Liberal and a Conservative respectively, and in due course separately invited me to stand for the county division. I rejoined by a letter to the principal paper, stating my equal abhorrence from both parties, and my profound disbelief in "party government," ending up with the statement, "that when a really patriotic and national party shall arise in England I should be glad to place myself at the service of my country, *if so desired.*"

Later on, finding that the General Election of '84 was likely to turn exclusively upon Home Rule, a subject in which I had always taken the deepest interest and had strongly urged in press and platform, I consented to stand for a large manufacturing northern town, where I was able to put forward my all-round plans of reform *ad libitum*, and acquired a clear, if painful, insight into the ways and means of British politicians.

I found the view formed at the age of twenty-one, in the main, perfectly correct, and after a brief but ineffectual struggle to reconcile British politics with patriotism, and to press the ways of reformation upon unwilling ears, I abandoned the design entirely, not so much because I had grown weak in the faith of my remedies, but *because I found that no one wanted to be reformed!* Why should they? There would be no money in it.

I found that Conservatives and Liberals, with few exceptions, regarded politics as a game whose stakes took the shape of rank, wealth and pensions; that the main difference between the two parties, is that the Liberals of to-day, out of regard possibly for their great and undoubted achievements in the past, "*profess*" more loudly than their adversaries, but as for their *policy* and *methods*, they are absolutely identical, consisting briefly in (1) "sticking to power"; and (2) "gam-moning" the democracy. Here is the whole art of British government in a nutshell. Such patriots as exist in England

are always found *outside* Parliament, because everything conspires to discourage them from taking a hand *inside*; since, if they were once let in they would soon spoil the game. Such as cannot be prevented from getting in give more trouble to their leader than the entire government of the country. The pretended patriots, who get in merely to be bought off, are easily silenced by bribes and pensions; but when they are genuine, and there are many such in the Radical ranks—mostly fanatics of sorts—then indeed are the dovescotes fluttered. Through an ingenious adaptation of the same tricks which enable the average British schoolmaster to make his scholars the partners of his iniquities by inculcating "*strict fidelity to the school,*" the parliamentary "new boy," if recalcitrant and unwilling to fall into line, is "boycotted" or "ragged," and denounced as being "*disloyal to his chief,*" as if forsooth his constituents had elected him for that end! If still unamenable alike to argument or threats he refuses to "play the game," the Party have no choice but to promote him. A ministerial post usually soothes the savagest breast, and failing that, the recalcitrant one is often put into the Cabinet, where his subtle colleagues privately fool him to the top of his bent, and publicly praise his honesty and disinterestedness, calling him in derision, "Honest John," etc., etc.

At forty-five I found myself slowly drifting into the position of stock chairman of the district, and doomed to open all the bazaars, patronize the so-called balls, fancy fairs, fêtes and bazaars, devised expressly to gratify the personal vanity of the idlest busybodies in the county, and besides being expected to contribute to help on causes for which I had no sympathy, whose means I disapproved, and whose funds were mostly absorbed by the "able and disinterested gentlemen" aforesaid.

Roused to the danger of my position by a rise to two chairmanships in the week, I pondered deeply upon the whole duty of man and the duties of citizenship in particular, and finding myself on the brink of that slippery slope of public



favour, from whose slavery there is no escape but the grave, I came to the deliberate conclusion that it was my instant duty to decide between the rival rights of family or citizenship—for good and all. Further, was I not conscious, or at all events suspicious of being made a stalking-horse for vain enterprises, idle show and insincere follies, for which I entertained a profound contempt, and which I ascribe partly to the restlessness and partly to the incurable love of self-advertisement of the Anglo-Saxon race? Also had I any solid grounds for the belief that I was doing more good than harm?

My conclusion was in the negative. I had firmly satisfied myself by that time (1) that party politics *cannot* advance public good to any appreciable extent; (2) that English politicians do not desire to advance anything or anybody but themselves; (3) I came to think J. Stuart Mill was right when he declared that the man who made two blades of grass grow where there grew only one before, was more deserving of his country's gratitude than the most notable statesman of the realm. So I set myself to cultivate and plant waste lands, and succeeded in the teeth of all opposition and adverse prophecies beyond my highest expectations. "*Si quaeris Monumenta, circumspice.*"

It will perhaps be objected that the criticism of those who do not frequent "Society" can have no value. True it is that since the age of twenty-one I have kept aloof from the society of my fellow-countrymen and women—as far as it was possible for me to do so. Nevertheless, I have taken infinite pains for many years to sound the secret springs and causes of its being, not wholly, I imagine, without success: nor can one, without being blind, deaf or idiotic, help seeing what is going on around one. Its "loudness" compels attention from the most unwilling. It advertises itself from the housetops. Those who are in the thick of it are those who least observe its ways. You might as well ask a man in a fog what he thinks of the scenery; or ask a fish what he thinks of a watery life. That a man

seeks society, defines him sufficiently for all practical purposes. Conversely, to endure English society, and not to deteriorate, is in itself highest praise, but how many are there that deserve it?

History and experience tell us that while society is young and fresh and green, virtue flourishes and the State defies decay; but they do not so much attribute national decay to "Society," as we call it, that is, "social agglomeration," or a "herding of both sexes together," as to the vices that flow from the excess of luxury and wealth. I am inclined to think that as the most striking difference between man's nearest rivals in the animal creation and himself is the gregariousness of the former and the solitariness of the latter, so man's chief cause of decay in those qualities—which knit the State together—of earnestness, sincerity and fidelity proceed from the advancement out of a solitary, and hence a meditative state, to a gregarious and hence a thoughtless and frivolous habit of life. Not idly or in vain did St. James urge upon Christians the importance of "*keeping oneself unspotted from the world,*" as an essential condition of "religion pure and undefiled." Does not this clearly indicate the apostle's view of the corrupting character of social intercourse?

This is the explanation of my attitude, and these the warrant of my sincerity.

Descended from a Cavalier stock, I am in *theory* as deeply opposed to a foreign dynasty as I am free from the silly *practice* of Jacobite fanatics, who see in a Bavarian princess the rightful sovereign of England. Nor do I hold that countries were made for kings—but kings for countries—wherefore if, as I cannot consider doubtful, the greater bulk of my fellow-countrymen are content along with Spain, and Italy, and Denmark, to be ruled by German princes, I should be the last to express dissent, since loyalty to any dynasty soever constitutes the surest guarantee of national happiness.

Having much to lose and nothing to gain, my interest would

incline me to the Conservative side, were not their practise generally at variance with their professions, and their cynical selfishness repellant to my sense of truth and justice. Greatly as the early history of the Liberal party captivate my heart and enlist my sympathy, their wild and reckless career after the '60's disentitle them to the esteem which their earlier reforming exploits had evoked. Well disposed and disinterested as are the average Liberal recruits—the inherent evil prevails, that Liberalism from its very nature draws into its ranks the most generous, self-denying and enthusiastic spirits of the people—the stuff, in short, of which saints and martyrs are made, if you will—but like all such, ill-balanced, one-sided, self-willed and impracticable. It therefore necessarily harbours all the “cranks,” “faddists,” “fanatics,” and “sentimentalists” in the realm, each of whom cares nothing and knows nothing of any grief or care but his own and has neither the wit nor the knowledge to comprehend that in a highly complex society, sudden or ill-planned reformation often brings greater ills than those which it is designed to remove. Such men, too, are the natural prey of self-seeking rogues, who easily lead them on to their own and their nation's destruction. Far be it from me to impute such designs to their present blameless if somewhat colourless leader, whose only reproach would seem to be that he has neither the character nor experience required to rule a menagerie, or manage a lunatic asylum.

I am as far, however, removed from sympathy with the insane adherence of the Liberals to the letter instead of the spirit of Free Trade, as I am disgusted with the insincerity of the Conservatives, who now, for the first time, adopt the platform cry of Fiscal Reform to taunt the Liberals with, when for twenty years they have had its importance urged upon them, and yet have never stirred hand or foot to so much as attempt it. For years, when in opposition, they thundered at the Whigs for abandoning Pitt's admirable system of applying the returns from indirect taxation to the redemption of the National Debt, and in later

days for their iniquitous continuance of a war tax of 8d. in the pound in times of peace, yet when their power was absolute and unquestioned in both Houses of the Legislature, no attempt whatever was made by the Conservatives to redeem their pledges or justify their contentions in any particular. They raved at the confiscatory character of the uneven and inequitable Death Duties, yet made no attempt whatever when returned to power to rescind them. They vowed in opposition that the Liberals were bent on ruining the brewing and farming interests, that they were squandering the national coal-wealth for want of protection, driving the milling trade out of the country, and filling the East End with foreign paupers—and yet with nearly twenty years what have they done except disgust their supporters, deceive their friends, hatch up a war and blunder through it at a cost of 300 millions to the nation, and almost double the yearly expenditure of the Government ?

Let it not be imagined that they stayed in thus long because they enjoyed the confidence of the country. It was nothing but the dread of worse incompetence and evils awaiting them from the opposite side which so long stayed their hands, until at last even John Bull's incomparable patience gave way, and in sheer desperation he flung himself into the arms of the opposite camp.

That a trading, shipbuilding, manufacturing, densely populous and highly-developed country, where the land is owned by fewer hands than anywhere in the world, presents all the features that most urgently cry for free trade, must be apparent to the least reflective mind ; but it is no more true to say that we possess free trade, than to say that we possess a monopoly of the moon. Had we ordered our vital concerns like *men*, instead of *Whigs and Tories*, (*arcades ambo !*) we should not now be in the ridiculous plight to which our insane party strife and political auctions have reduced us, nor would Providence "in our old age have left us naked to our"—Colonies.

THE AUTHOR.

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# ARE WE A STUPID PEOPLE ?

## CHAPTER I

“O wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see ourselves as ithers see us.”

### INTRODUCTORY

So sang Burns long ago : but I doubt if that Power would be popular either in Scotland or in England. We all entreat our friends to give us a candid opinion of ourselves, but we are seldom pleased when we get it. “ Holding up the mirror to nature,” as Shakespeare has it, is equally distasteful, especially when done on a large scale. Not that Britons dislike hearing themselves “ run down ” by foreigners. Indeed they rather like it than otherwise. It seems to tickle their vanity, and since they put it down entirely to jealousy it has the effect rather to exalt their feeling of superiority than offend their pride. But when a fellow Briton criticises them, they cry out, “ How dares he ? ” etc., etc.

Now I propose—greatly daring—to hold up “ the mirror ” to my fellow-countrymen in some notable respects. Up till the Boer War I should have hardly dared to do so. Since that momentous epoch thinking Englishmen have opened their eyes and stared very wide in the abortive attempt to discover how it comes about that foreigners display such unanimity in hating and reviling us, and to this end I shall endeavour to “ hold up the mirror to nature,” however unpopular such a course may be.

But you will exclaim in one voice, “ Who is this that offers to teach us what we are like ? Who is this new Moses to guide us out of the wilderness ? ” Calm yourselves, gentle readers, my pretensions are not so high as that. Long years of observation and intimate relations with most European nations have taught me this salient fact—that no man, or woman either, can thoroughly understand the “ zeitgeist ” of a people unless

married among them, or established in business among them (and not always then) or otherwise closely related by ties of relationship; and in all cases, and above all, be thoroughly acquainted with their language. I have, however, also remarked that when an Englishman with any of these qualifications passes many years among, and becomes thoroughly acquainted with, any *single* nation other than his own, he either becomes ten times more bigoted a Briton than he was before, or more often sinks the Briton altogether in the ultra anti-British Cosmopolite, without widening his range in any degree, or possessing any wider faculty for scanning the European horizon than if he had remained at home.

These, then, are my qualifications, that knowing seven or eight languages, and having from early childhood lived in intimacy with my foreign relatives of various countries, besides having been partly educated abroad and having subsequently spent among foreigners the best years of my life, I regard it as a patriotic duty in my later years to render what I believe to be the greatest service that can be done to my fellow-countrymen by a faithful and unbiassed account of how the Englishman looks to various nations of the civilised globe.

I may here premiss that there are three grades or varieties of linguists.

(1) The commonest variety is the young man from Oxford or Cambridge who is firmly persuaded that having spent infinite time and pains in amassing words of various languages which he is informed by his too indulgent tutors will easily blossom out when he finds himself abroad into French, Italian, or German as the case may be, flounders heavily whenever he thinks fit to produce them, and is generally reduced once more to English by a foreign waiter or other whom he finds infinitely more eloquent in his own language than himself, and who returns from his travels after many vain attempts to make himself understood with a very low opinion of extra-Britannic intelligence, contenting himself for the rest of his life by interlarding his own language with ample scraps of foreign tongues intended to convey the impression of foreign research and travel.

Others there are who, having acquired a foreign language well enough to converse familiarly and freely, gain much information of a generally useless and encyclopædic or guide-book description,

please themselves exceedingly, while greatly boring their foreign friends, and come back to their own country as travelled men.

This is not the sort of man I mean. Highly estimable in his way, gaining a certain reputation for his fellow-countrymen, and giving himself a good time as the Yankees say, he rarely gains any insight into the ways of foreigners, much less into their way of looking at other nations, inclusive of his own. Of such is the common globe-trotter or rather the best educated among them.

For the man, however, who reaches the third stage or has learnt a foreign language in his early youth so that his accent is undistinguishable from those of the natives among whom he moves, a variety of unpleasantness dogs his steps. Your beloved foreign friends or relatives, as the case may be, continually blurt out the most unpleasant things about your nation with at most an apologetic remark about forgetting that you are an Englishman; or if you interpose any objection, they will say, "After all, you are only an imitation Englishman, and are sure not to mind"; or if in more general society where you are not known to the company at large, you are treated to a large selection of most unpleasant manifestations of continental anti-English bigotry. Here it is no longer a case of "How you schpek vell, I should not haf known but dat you vas Scherman, etc.," but something more like this, "Of course you are only half an Englishman, and you know as well as we do what we think about your countrymen."

I scarcely know which is the more unpleasant situation—to find yourself in general company taken for a native, and out of good-fellowship maintaining the illusion in the face of a very offensive caricature of English customs or manners without being able to retaliate or protest under pain of being denounced as an intentional though most unwilling impostor, or to be compelled in intimate society to grin and look pleasant when your national corns are being carefully trodden on with a passing comment of "Of course you don't mind as you are only half an Englishman."

One of the earliest shocks to my national pride was a serious discussion in a French lycée upon the respective claims to civilisation of the English and Russian. (I must parenthetically remark that the French always class the English and the Russian together; surely a remarkable instance of the utter

inefficiency of concrete knowledge to alter abstract national sentiment; for, historically speaking, there can be nothing more widely separate than the history of the two nations.) The louder talker of the two finally clenched the subject by challenging disproof of the well-known fact that Englishmen sold their wives at Smithfield, while as for their capacity for drinking, Shakespeare himself, their most admired poet, while admitting that the Danes were the biggest drunkards in Europe, said that an Englishman could drink any Dane dead drunk with ease.

Many years after, when dining with a Portuguese family at Rio Janeiro, upon my expressing some surprise at a remark that fell from a neighbour in respect of a certain Brazilian worthy whose early death had been ascribed to "speaking English," the astonishing but unpleasant explanation was casually vouchsafed that the ordinary term in Portuguese for getting drunk was "speaking English."

Again, in Spanish society, a remarkably loquacious senator once appealed to me for confirmation as to whether it was not an undoubted fact that London is the clearly predicted "Scarlet Woman" of the Apocalypse, corresponding most accurately in position and attributes. When objection was offered to the statement that she sat on Seven Hills he said, "But everybody has heard of Seven Dials" (which he apparently confused with the Seven Vials of the Apocalypse), finishing a triumphant harangue with the remark that she was clearly the strumpet of nations, and gathered about her all the people of the earth, for whom she made, sold or carried, all the merchandise of the world.

It will be easily seen by these chance memories, first, how difficult it is to combat half-truths which pass from mouth to mouth, and though frequently disproved, always reappear in a fresh form.

Nor are we the only sufferers. Can anything be more childish than our frog- and snail-eating and such like legends?

"Is there a boy whose soul's so dead

That never to himself has said, 'Every Frenchman lives on frogs and snails!'"

But I shall be told by the ingenuous reader, "Surely there is some truth in the saying that many Frenchmen do eat frogs, and others, at least in Burgundy, do eat snails." To this I

reply, Have you by chance, dear reader, ever sat down to a dish of escargots à la Bourguignonne or a fricassée of frog's-legs à la Chantilly? If you have not, I have; and I think that had you enjoyed those delicious morsels cooked in that delicious manner, you could not but admit that these are not dishes to be lightly spurned, still less to be made a subject of national reproach. Rather should it be a matter of reproach to ourselves that we do not appreciate but despise these simple gifts of Providence. And here let me take this somewhat trivial subject as a text on which to preach a sermon to my beloved countrymen,—for this lies at the very root of our national antipathies; that root syllogistically expressed, being “What you do, we don't; and what we don't, you do,” or, “Because you do it and we don't, *therefore*, you must be a fool.”

Given the opportunity, probably no man is more easily won over or converted to foreign views than the average Briton, but when he looks across the sea in a critical spirit he is apt to pour unmeasured sarcasm upon any practice that differs from his own. Here again is an instance of how the “half-truth” bloated by national prejudice swells itself out like a bull-frog till it becomes an absolute bar to international sympathies, and possibly may even amount to a menace of war; and yet how simple to explain away, and at the same time how difficult to refute. For example, if you call a Frenchman a frog-eater or a snail-devourer when it is a thousand to one if he ever ate a snail or a frog in his life, he only thinks you as stupid and witless as you would if he were to call you a tripe-stuffer or a devourer of pineapples, neither of which estimable commodities might conceivably have ever passed your lips.

On the other hand, when you go, gentle reader, to a French theatre or take up a French Almanach Comique (save the mark!) you will possibly, if not of a philosophic temperament, be extremely apt to boil over at the presentment of an Englishman or Englishwoman of the usual French comic type in a deer-stalker and a bright green plaid coat and large check trousers—his face ornamented with wide-spreading, red bushy whiskers—with a wife similarly attired, allowing for differences in sex, adorned with long ringlets which flow gracefully down each

side of her meagre face, while, to crown all, large yellow tusks emerge from their mouths, completing the beauty of the picture. Here again is the half truth above referred to, so difficult to refute and so easy to defend.

I will explain. After the great war with Napoleon was happily closed by Waterloo, the difference of prices between living in France and in England was so great, that numberless old maids of uncertain age and fixed income, finding that they were able to live in France in a style which the high prices caused by national exhaustion and heavy debt made impossible in their own country, flocked to all the smaller towns of France and Belgium, where they were enabled to live with great comfort on their small annuities of £25 to £50 a year. In my younger days in such places I still saw many of them; they were invariably eloquent upon the subject of rising prices, and were usually understood to subsist upon tea and bread and butter. It was many years before I satisfactorily explained the reasons which produced that extraordinary uniformity of face and appearance which has unfortunately resulted in building up a type under which Englishmen are likely to groan for many a day. Science has clearly demonstrated—nor can any observant visitor to China fail in being impressed with the truth of its teaching in this respect—that the special and invariable effect of tea saturation or, if you will, tea poisoning, resulting from the continuous application of that beneficent, but in large quantities disastrous beverage, is a pale and flaccid face, and above all that unflashing of the teeth which follows the abuse of astringents. As for the long curls which still adorn the “Engleesh mees” of the French comic stage they are still visibly impressed in the eyes of my memory, in those same French country towns of bygone days.

With all intention, therefore, to sympathize with the outraged feelings of my fair countrywomen thus grossly libelled, I am bound to say in my character of unbiassed umpire, that if anything the fault is more on the English than on the French side; for while both caricatures are inherently absurd and misleading, that of attributing to the Frenchman the universal habit of eating frogs or snails has substantially less foundation, in fact, than the abounding “mees” of country towns of other days.

It would have been an injustice to the average Frenchman or even Englishman to insinuate that he considered such types as either universal or general. Nor is it certain that any large section of either people believe this type to exist at all in these days; but having no better weapon at hand wherewith to wreak their ever-present hostility towards an hereditary foe, they use such terms of abuse or caricatures for want of anything better or more consistent with truth. The only remedy that I can suggest, which will adequately appease the wounded feelings of my fair countrywomen, is to ponder over this pregnant fact, that if Frenchmen of the First Empire found no worse form of ridicule than the ringleted "mees" for nearly a century, when mutual hatreds were still seething in the breast of Briton and Frank, is it not consoling to reflect that all these years have not developed in the French mind a still more offensive type than that to which they cling with such faithful tenacity?

Let them rather beware lest their indifference to foreign opinion, and their haughty and ungracious demeanour while travelling abroad, lay the foundation of a far deeper and better grounded antipathy than that which is afforded by the grotesque if childish caricatures of days gone by.

Here I can almost fancy I hear my fair readers indignantly exclaim, "I know exactly what he means. He refers to those silly attacks in the newspapers that appear from time to time about ladies wearing out their old clothes when they are abroad, or coming down to table-d'hôte in a morning wrapper, or going out shopping in tweed caps and ulsters. Besides, how could such things determine international relations? He might as well talk of straws causing an earthquake or an avalanche."

Well, gentle reader, I am not prepared to deny that straws will sometimes originate a *human* avalanche or earthquake, if not a terrestrial. There is no greater mistake than to say, as many will, "These are merely straws that point which way the wind blows." I am not so sure that the straws themselves are not in many cases the cause of the disaster.

When we heard, at the outbreak of the most terrible war of modern times, between France and Germany, that the silliest of a silly people ran to and fro on the boulevards shouting out, "à Berlin," did not our papers say there was not much in it?

but it showed which way the wind blew, in other words the trend of public feeling. They were wrong. It was the straws blown hither and hither on the storm of public opinion that themselves determined that momentous event. While Napoleon sat shivering in his palace, uncertain how to act, listening for every puff of popular feeling, dreading to lose that crown which he had so cleverly snatched from a thoughtless Democracy, and had kept by flattering, coaxing, and bullying in turn the astute statesmen who opposed him, the now unnerved leader of 1870, crippled with disease and surfeited with pleasure, turned hither and thither for any sign from the people as to how popular feeling ran. It was literally the straws of the boulevards from which proceeded that appalling calamity that drenched France with her best blood; it was the students, the riff-raff, and the schoolboys of Paris, the lightest and most frivolous of a most frivolous people, not the iron hand of Bismarck, that cast the die. But of all this more anon.

Turn we now to our American cousins as we fondly call them, soon to be our leaders, if, as the copy-books say, "Imitation is sincerest flattery."

Staying with some relatives in Baltimore in the early '70's, boy-like I hotly contested a casual sentence which fell from the lips of a distinguished young soldier of the Confederate Army, who at the age of twenty-six in the bloody field of Vicksburg had earned the command of his regiment by reason of the slaughter of all his brother officers, but otherwise the mildest of men. "Wal now, see here, I should never have taken you for a Britisher by your accent. You talk just like an Amurrican. And I guess you haint ben so long as a year in the States without finding out that we claim to speak better English than you do." Here again we have one of these half-truths which nakedly stated seem ludicrous, but obtain universal belief throughout the States, upon what may seem very slender grounds.

I will not trouble my readers with the heated argument which ensued between myself and the gallant colonel on this occasion, or enlarge upon the very mixed feelings with which I regarded his intolerable assumptions. Suffice it to say, rightly or wrongly, such is the popular belief in the United States.

A few months later I got another reminder in the same direction



by a remark made to me by a well-meaning young rancher out West, who prefaced a highly affectionate speech begotten of many cock-tails, in which he assured me of his eternal friendship coupled with the instant disposal of all his goods in my favour, consisting, as far as I noticed, of his lasso, his bowie, and his "gun," in course of which he occasionally mentioned as my most endearing feature that I "warnt like any Britisher he'd ever come across." "How's that"? said I. "Why," he replied, "you don't talk about an 'orse, or a hass or any of them things, any way, no sirree." I confess I was staggered by the compliment. It however served to throw some light into an unexpected corner of the trans-Atlantic mind, which however grating was not without its advantages.

We English are apt to forget, in our new-found pride in the establishment of universal compulsory education, that up to about thirty years ago the English as a nation were worse educated and had less opportunities for education than any civilized people in Europe or America.

It would be laughable were it not painful to make a list of the number of British authors, who, in sheer ignorance of the amazing educational shortcomings of their own land, were wont to pour forth their misplaced pity for the backward and ignorant condition of the non-commercial nations, such as Spain, Italy, and South America, and confusing things intellectual with material, in their compassion for their luckless condition, assume that their educational equipment is inferior to our own.

Not until Mr. Gladstone declared on a solemn occasion in the late sixties that no other national system of education in Europe was so poor, so meagre, and so scandalously inadequate as our own, did the nation fully realise that though there were ample facilities for the well-to-do, there were none whatever for those who were not able to pay handsomely for those educational opportunities which abound for all classes in every other civilized land.

Almost a hundred years before we made any serious attempt as a nation to educate our people, the citizens of the then new republic, freshly emancipated from the galling yoke of an incompetent and retrograde system of home government, in her Declaration of Independence, proclaimed the national duty of

educating all its members. Hence it fell out that the United States, possessing, as it did unquestionably, greater facilities of popular education than Great Britain, contained a far greater proportion of educated inhabitants. At a time when fully half of the English people were literally unable to read, there was hardly a soul in the United States of adult age who did not read his daily newspaper.

It may not have been strictly accurate to say that North Americans spoke better English than Englishmen, while their newspapers teemed with errors and vulgarisms of every kind, which were certainly not according to Cocker; nevertheless it could not be denied that a far greater number of Americans than Britons not only spoke a tongue which closely resembled our classical standard, but were undeniably better educated in every essential respect.

Further than this, there can be no question that beside this uncomfortable feeling of intellectual superiority which I have shown to be very far from ill-founded, there undoubtedly runs through the transatlantic mind the deeply-seated conviction, not unalloyed with compassionate affection, that "the old country" (as it is called) is "on the down grade." Many circumstances have contributed to this effect.

The Declaration of Independence, though possibly of French origin, and smelling strongly of the Contrat Social of J. J. Rousseau and the Encyclopædists generally, was heralded as the new dawn of enfranchised manhood by all the down-trodden nations of the Old World. The encomiums of Abbé Sièyes and the eloquent Girondists of the National Assembly, who vied with each other to foist a similar constitution upon their distracted country, all conspired to turn Uncle Sam's head. The meanest criminal who is spared the gaol on condition that he will emigrate to America and trouble his country no more, scarce landed becomes infected with a notion that the humblest American can teach a trick to any European of them all. This notion pervades the whole country from end to end. It is well typified in the current story of the little Yankee boy who was seen weeping copiously, and when comforted by a good-natured foreigner, who was passing by and inquired the motive of his tears, said, he was beaten by his father, and he would not so

much mind if he were not a —— foreigner. The mere contact with American soil and still further the right of being born within its wide territory seems to infuse a spirit of rebellious contempt for all traditions, conventions and prejudices of the historic past. Like Athéné who sprang fully armed from the hand of Jove, Columbia passes a sponge over the European slate, and announces to the world that she is the new phœnix risen from the ashes of the effete nations of the earth.

We are apt to sneer at the American's predilection for bunkum and look upon it as a kind of national disaster, proceeding partly from exuberant youth, and partly from want of knowledge; but a closer acquaintance with our trans-Atlantic cousins is apt to convince us that we put the boot on the wrong leg. So far from this, when we consider the average teaching, the state of public opinion, and the body of tradition in which he is brought up, we are astounded at the comparative modesty of their pretensions and assertions. To most Yankees it appears as clear as the noontide sun that the European nations are "played out," or to use a French expression, "in full decadence"; and in spite of the lingering affection not unmixed with pride with which they regard the land that gave them birth, coupled with a sincere love and respect for Englishmen, and as far as my experience goes a sensitiveness as far removed as possible from jealousy about the good opinion and esteem of the land from which they sprang, the views formed upon European nations generally apply to our own country in no less a degree. One must become as it were saturated with the American atmosphere before one can understand fully the force of this feeling and appreciate the height, depth, and width of their national self-satisfaction, and the almost tender pity with which they regard the denizens of the used-up land from whose loins they sprang. Not that they believe their institutions to be perfect; not that they have no lurking suspicion that "they are o'er young yet," and a trifle "green and sour i' th' mouth"; still, nothing can exceed the strength of their collective conviction that, like the Muslims of old under the banner of Mohammed, it is, and will always be their pride and their privilege, to hold up the banner and point out the path of life to the desolate nations of the Old World.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTORY (*continued*)

IN the preceding chapter I have briefly enumerated some of the most striking instances which I have myself met with of the views held by foreign nations in our regard.

I now propose to examine the causes that have contributed to produce the undoubted volume of dislike of which we obtained such clear manifestations during the course of the Boer War, and if possible to define more precisely the views held respecting ourselves. Some of my readers will say, "After all, what does it matter? We fortunately live in an island surrounded by a sea so conveniently narrow as to enable us to reach the mainland without danger or difficulty, and at the same time wide enough to prevent our enemies landing upon our shores with any hostile intent while our navy dominates the seas." Another will exclaim, "We ought to be rather flattered than otherwise by their abusive language towards us, which proceeds from the merest jealousy, and is obviously caused by our overwhelming commercial superiority which crushes all rivals and naturally causes heart-burning and dislike." Or a third, "It is a tribute to our high qualities, and if inconvenient sometimes, is, or should be, rather a source of pride than regret."

A fourth will say, as I have continually heard Englishmen and Englishwomen exclaim, "After all, their hatred of us is made up of such a number of trifles (if we may judge by the letters which are poured from time to time on the papers in explanation of the phenomenon) that it is surely not worth our while to take any particular pains to please them or to bother our heads about what they think or do not think."

Now while I am fully agreed with those who, following the lesson of the celebrated fable of the man, the boy, and the donkey, deem it a hopeless task to try to please everybody, and unbefitting our national dignity to make serious attempts in that direction, my labour will not go unrewarded if I persuade my beloved countrymen to see, and, if possible, amend certain glaring defects in what I may call the international conduct of our countrymen in great measure proceeding from our unfortunate

political constitution, as well as others, which partly proceed from our national character, and partly from that self-same insular position which, while depriving us of the close intercourse which make of the rest of the European nations a kind of European family, prevents us from enjoying that wholesome attrition with alien ideas and customs and intellects which are so necessary an antidote to the evils of seclusion and isolation. Nor can I admit that we should lightly dismiss such matters as unworthy of the consideration of a strong and successful race.

It will be said that we are safe with our enormous navy ever circling our shores, and it is next to impossible for any nation or combination of nations to take us unawares. But has not the Boer War proved that our wide-stretching Empire subjects us continually in the most unexpected manner to so heavy a strain upon our resources and such sudden and unexpected dangers, that it is not at all impossible or even improbable that we should again find ourselves in such a position as we were in December, 1900; at which date had one, or at any rate two, nations combined to overthrow our commercial superiority, it is not impossible that we should have by this time ceased to exist as a nation, or else like Holland and Spain—once the leaders of the world—we should have been first ruined by an enormous war indemnity and then deprived of our Colonies, bound over to reduce our navy to moderate dimensions, and, in short, compelled to return to our original nothingness as a little sea-girt island inhabited admittedly by a fierce race of bull-dogs impossible to subdue, but in the opinion of most of our neighbours decidedly dangerous and unpleasant when unkennelled and allowed to roam abroad.

For let us remember that it was not one, nor two, nor three nations, nor even those to whom we were tied by terms of mutual political and commercial intercourse, who turned against us in our hour of need. It was an universal howl that arose throughout the European Press from St. Petersburg to San Francisco crying shame upon us and inveighing in the strongest terms against our greed and oppression, and our thirst for more goldfields and more territory which were the sole and only causes, according to their account, for declaring war upon a weak and harmless community! And when the war plunged us day by day deeper and deeper into the mire, as fresh difficulties of every kind arose till at length the wealth and might of

England trembled in the balance, a cry of delight and triumph went up from one end of Europe to the other, that at last the tyrant had met with its fitting retribution—that the trodden worm had turned upon the big bully—and that Heaven had at last thrown itself into the scales in order to redress the balance. Nor was it a mere manifestation of sympathy for a weaker nation oppressed by a stronger, which if it were justified by actual facts could not fail to strike a spark in every human breast. Worse yet remained. The same outcry that held up England to universal execration as a bully and a land-grabber went on to revive every abuse and contumely that the foreign imagination could devise or the petty spite of every contemptible quill-driver could dig up out of past or present history to blacken our fame withal. In those dark days when even the United States largely sympathised with our enemy, and even as a whole, sided strongly against us; and Edward VII.'s nephew himself, the German Kaiser, whom England through her press never ceased to belaud and bespatter with slavish adulation and praise, actually sent a telegram to Kruger as a culminating proof of aversion and abhorrence from our cause—it will be remembered that many said that it was not the nations of Europe but the Press—the venal and perfidious Press—that sought to sell their newspapers by inventing these malicious stories against us. Nothing could be further from the truth. While it is undoubtedly the case that through the untiring efforts of that far-sighted statesman, Lord Salisbury, whose loss we recently deplored, the Kaiser was induced to draw in his horns and pocket his premature and unsupported advances, and thus the war cloud was swept from the political horizon—there can be nothing more obvious in the light of after events, than that he himself, if not the originator, was undoubtedly the head and front of the entire anti-English movement in Germany from first to last. For anyone who is well acquainted with the position of the German Press and the power placed in the hands of the Emperor by the law, must know that the greater part of the newspapers of the kingdom are directly inspired or subsidised by the Imperial Chancellor, and that it would be a matter of impossibility for any universal crusade of this kind to be taken up had it not the Emperor's complete and entire support. Nor

can any greater fallacy exist than to suppose blood connections and family ties are of any avail to stem the direction of a "welt-politik" or the trend of a nation's aspiration.

To those who are accustomed to believe implicitly in national affinities, and to whom the vague phrase that "blood is thicker than water" conveys an axiomatic truth, it must seem surprising to reflect that while undoubtedly the German and Scandinavian nations are closely related to us by collateral descent and other ties, of habits, language, and temperament, so far from evincing any special consideration for their insular cousins in our hour of need, we have to proceed to the extreme verge of Southern Europe, in fact, up to the very pillars of Hercules, before we can detect in public press, popular literature, or social intercourse, those marks of sympathy we should expect and deserve.

Taking, then, the Boer War as a test, according to the well-known saying that "a friend in need is a friend indeed," with the solitary exception of the United States, whose stout and persistent condemnation of our campaign was mingled with a certain compassionate or friendly sympathy, it may be said without fear of contradiction that the closer our connection by ties of commerce, religion, common language and habits, the more virulent the pandemonium of abuse, the more vigorous the storm of denunciation poured out upon our heads.

It was reserved for poor little Spain in the land of grapes and olives on the far-off fringe of Europe, and the very extreme edge of its civilisation, to produce a few cheering and generous articles and speeches informing the Spanish people that possibly after all the right might be on our side.

Next to that came echoes of sympathy if not approval from the far-off toe of Italy, where newspapers upheld the British view and uttered friendly sentiments which poured balm upon the Briton's soul.

Could any law or rule be framed for defining or explaining the inconsequent vagaries that govern international amities, the malicious might infer from this that the more an Englishman is known the less he is appreciated; and if this test of the Transvaal War, to which I have referred, were the final verdict of the nations in our regard, it would certainly seem at least a

remarkable coincidence. The same rule would apply in respect to the sympathy shown in Turkey and the distant regions of Hungary beyond the influence of the Viennese Press (where anti-British feeling was still predominant). That in these four remote parts of the central continents where Englishmen are little seen and less known than elsewhere, there should have been an exhibition in their favour, would certainly seem to point to the confirmation of such a law. In truth, for some reason which I have never been able to completely understand, the Spaniard has a sneaking respect for us, to say nothing of a latent affection which I should greatly like to ascribe to gratitude for our assistance during the war we waged for their independence, were it not for certain primary Spanish works of education which make it abundantly clear that the Spanish youth is not so much brought up to a spirit of gratitude for English benefits as to revere and admire the heroic efforts of his own nation in repelling the Gallic invader!

As to the Hungarians and the Turks, the affection and the esteem that mutually bind us seem on the part of the Turks to be rather the outcome of the pleasant traditions and friendly associations that arose in the Crimean War, followed up by a series of official posts both naval and military held by Englishmen since that day, while the Hungarian good-fellowship has been secured by a strong similarity of habits, a mutual love of horses, and a common love of sport; to say nothing of mutual interchanges, consisting of game and remounts purchased from them, as well as every sort of sporting outfit, including blood horses, and prize farm-stock and machinery for which they are largely indebted to British skill and enterprise.

The popular Italian opinion respecting Englishmen, though not as favourable as the Spanish, has been of late years greatly influenced by the strong general conviction that we contributed largely as a nation to that unity which they hold so dear, as the result of Mr. Gladstone's appeal to the nations on behalf of the oppressed victims of Neapolitan misgovernment. Over and above this, in common with his Swiss neighbours, your Italian has a very high appreciation of the pecuniary advantages of British patronage, and dreads greatly to scare the Briton from his hospitable shores.



It is reserved for the French (of whom it must be said that much must be conceded in view of the many knocks that we have exchanged in days gone by) to refer to us in their public prints as "ce peuple brutal," "cette nation stupide," and to habitually refer to us under what they believe to be the suitable designation of "Perfidé Albion." At first sight this last appellation would seem to be as inappropriate as any that could well be chosen. We are so accustomed to hear our neighbours attribute the lowest possible motives to all our political actions that nothing but a close survey of the actual facts of history can avail to bring us to the painful conclusion that in respect of treaty-breaking and breaking-faith in divers ways with our Gallic foes, we have at least proved ourselves their equals if not their superiors.

I have before adverted to our political institutions as being a prominent factor in sowing those seeds of discord which trouble the rest of our neighbours and fill them with confusion and dismay. For while our neighbours either have the executive power firmly placed in the hands of a king, a president, or a permanent council, we—alone of nations, though democratic in the highest degree as to our constitution—have, with a fatuity which may result in our ultimate ruin, declined to place in any hands that supreme control which alone enables the bark of State to be safely steered, but have preferred to commit it to what is called a "Cabinet," composed of ever-shifting members drawn alternatively from two opposite camps as far apart as the poles, with the natural result that no man can guess by our policy of to-day what shall be our policy of to-morrow.

Nor can they be blamed if they form a harsh conclusion from these premisses; for while we know as an ascertained fact that the strength of a chain is that of its weakest link—so the strength of a democracy, unless, as in the case of the U.S.A., combined with healthy monarchic principles dovetailed into its president, is in vulgar speech that of the "biggest fool" contained in its electorate.

To attempt to account for the infinite variation of divergence existing between French and English would indeed be a Sisyphean task which I should be loath to undertake.

It may be taken for granted that whatever appears to an

Englishman black most surely appears white to a Frenchman, and *vice versa*. There is nothing stranger than the singular fate which has, so to speak, joined these two nations by the closest ties of commercial and geographical intercourse; while but for this enforced proximity, and the necessity of reaching—through France—the continent of Europe, one could scarcely imagine that any Englishman would desire to cross her borders. Her very language is the antipod of our own; so different is the spirit of the two languages that even the simplest phrases cannot be rendered so as to convey the right impression; and while the sequence of words more closely follow those of the English language than those of the German, the meaning conveyed by similar phrases of almost identical origin is totally dissimilar. To this must be added the tradition founded on mutual hatred dating from the earliest dawn of history, and a firm conviction on the part of both nations of the inferiority of the other in every respect; for nothing is more certain than that the commoner sort, where hatred is present in a high degree, will infallibly discover motives for contempt, or, if they cannot, will invent them. Moreover, this mutual hatred and contempt, at least on the French side, which at present is the theme that we are most concerned about in these pages, is certainly, as in Germany, not confined to the lowest classes or even the great bulk of the people, but is present in the highest classes in an even higher degree than in the lower.

It is not unusual to find grave professors and learned legislators calmly discussing the causes of the British inability to appreciate the charms of what they choose to call their “*sel gaulois*” (or French equivalent for wit) by explaining that our diet of heavy indigestible food and half-roasted joints, etc., etc., on which they firmly believe we principally exist, form insuperable obstacles to the higher flights of fancy; while others will dilate on the obvious connection between the thickness of our murky atmosphere and the unquestionable dulness of our speech, literature and general policy. None in France any more than in Germany seem to ascribe our eccentric political action and our insular ways to their real origin, or make any serious attempt to inquire at first hand into the remote causes which have co-operated to deflect the British mind into muddy channels and obscure byways.

## CHAPTER III

### INTRODUCTORY (*continued*)

BEFORE I proceed to enumerate the various complaints laid to our charge by our foreign friends, it would be well to consider for a while the character and origin of these international dislikes, and then, by dividing them into subjective and objective classes, arrive at some determination as to how far they originate in the misguided minds of our opponents, and how far they have a real objective existence. To use an unsavoury scriptural phrase, we are said to "stink in the nostrils of the nations"—at least the press of Europe try to persuade us that that is the case—and it is surely interesting to know whether the stench proceeds from our neighbours or ourselves. In short, is this body of anti-British tradition purely fictitious, and does it exist solely and entirely in the distorted imagination of our critics, or has it any objective reality?

And first let us ask ourselves—Whence arose these shadowy evil reports? Looking back in history as far as ever we can go with any certainty, the earliest chroniclers took upon themselves to form somewhat reckless opinions of the nations of whom they wrote, hazarding at a venture and setting down this or that sweeping gibe from a desire rather to please their patrons or their rulers than to satisfy the strict requirements of truth. If pleasant or favourable, it is tolerably certain that such reports were not allowed to drop; similarly, if unpleasant, they were speedily treasured up for future use in order to belittle and insult a potential foe.

When our monkish chroniclers of early ages with the undoubted intention of pleasing their superiors—Norman to a man—referred to the Saxons as a swinish herd delighting only in guzzling and gluttony, it may be taken for granted that the Normans were not slow to avail themselves of these amiable epithets to vilify and irritate the subject race when occasion offered.

Go back a thousand years,—listen to Suetonius, and Tacitus, and Julius Cæsar. Do not the Scots, and the Germans, and the

Italians and what not who have been honoured by their friendly notice, glory in quoting their epithets of trivial praise up to the present hour? To cite a familiar instance of the reverse, do we not still throw in the teeth of the French that they are still as they were in the well-known phrase of Julius Cæsar, "Cupidi rerum novarum," "greedy of novelties"?

Going farther down the ladder of ages, however, on this side of the ballad-singers and minstrels, who were great inventors of gibes and jeers framed, like their predecessors, with the primary intention of pleasing the powers that be, and who were certainly as little moved by love of abstract truth as any living beings, we come to the earliest echoes of the press as the accredited voice of the nations. But in the early days there was no liberty for the press; newspapers were the mere organs of certain powers, generally ministers of kings, or courts, or parliaments; yet it cannot be doubted that whatever unpleasant jest or sneer could be collected from rhyme or popular ballad would surely be treasured up and reproduced as fancy dictated or opportunity offered. Nor can we doubt that, excepting the matter which can be culled from the great historians of the past, whose weighty names coupled with the absence of all contemporary contradiction could be used as a battering ram of enormous authority, the greater amount of the pernicious flood of angry abuse which breeds international hatreds must surely have originated at the bottom rather than at the top of society.

For just as the scum ever rises to the surface in the seething cauldron of popular fancy or popular fury, so we must look to the lowest ranks of humanity for invective and ingenious causes of quarrel. The nobler spirits of contending nations are ever more averse to vent their anger in verbal bickering than combatants of the lower sort. So, too, in our own time slang comes not from the top but from the lowest strata of society, gradually climbing up, by force of its appropriateness, or by tickling men's ears with its novelty, mounting finally, class by class, from the gutter to the drawing-room.

At the risk of offending my beloved countrymen by touching their vanity in its tenderest spot, a careful review of the whole situation compels me in all truth and honesty to state that by far the greatest number of the causes that conspire to form the

body of anti-British tradition are not subjective, but in the strictest sense objective, and founded in actual reality.

"After all, then," the indignant reader will exclaim, "you are on the side of our enemy: no doubt a little Englander; a rampant Radical; one of those who delight in fouling their own nest," etc., etc.

Nay, not so, gentle reader. Nothing but the strictest necessity, coupled with the sincerest desire to benefit my fellow-countrymen, compels me to the painful and ungrateful task of tearing the veil from unwilling eyes and letting in the full glare of distasteful truth. Believe me; wild horses would not drag from me "the secrets of our prison house" in the presence of the ribald foreigner. Nevertheless, I hold no duty more sacred or more closely incumbent upon every true lover of their country, than to apply the scalpel, however painful, to the diseased spots in the body, politic and social, and, whatever his private feelings or regard for his own popularity, to risk all and to brave all to secure what he believes to be the highest and most urgent interests of his beloved Motherland; and in order to prove that I am inspired with no hostile intent, but seek only to draw the mind of the nation to national shortcomings in order that they may rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the nations, I shall not merely be content to set down in succession those national habits which inspire the foreigner with that profound hatred and contempt which we at once recognise and deplore, but I propose by grouping them into heads and tracing them to their origin to bring home to my readers the contributing causes, and, if possible, to point out the direction in which the remedy may be sought. Nor can I think so ill of my fellow-countrymen as to believe that flattery holds more sway than truth in British breasts, nor doubt that however unpleasant be the conclusions that are drawn, Englishmen will neither repel nor refuse to admit them, providing the evidence adduced be sufficiently strong and the testimony of truth sufficiently conclusive.

I began the chapter by saying that the first stage in our analysis of the causes of Anglophobia among the nations would naturally be to divide them into objective and subjective classes. I wish that I could honestly find it in my heart to

group the greater number of them under the term subjective as having no existence except in the jaundiced eye of the foreigner ; but truth compels me to say that the greater number of these charges, however exaggerated by passing through unfriendly mouths, have a very real and demonstrable existence, which it would be vain to deny or extenuate.

A striking example of the subjective description of anti-English tradition may be found in the familiar, if ludicrous, exaggerations of the popular type, as shown upon the French or Italian stage (which I have already exhaustively described) together with the ancient but still surviving appellation of "Godam," or the long teeth and red locks of the British stage maiden.

It will here be observed with regard to the term "Godam," which Frenchmen are wont very harmlessly to apply to Britons in general, for the reason that at a remote period our countrymen were unable to express themselves without this or similar interjections—firstly, that this form of caricature closely resembles our own (probably retaliatory) epithet in regard to the French when we term them "froggies"—which, as I have before shown, is not without a groundwork of truth, and consists in its essence of the application of a partial attribution to a general ; secondly, that this is a habit so inherent in human nature that it suffices for the average man to see a single Spaniard with a beard, or German—say—with a flat nose, for him at once to say, "All Germans have flat noses, or all Spaniards have beards" ; thirdly, that such and similar caricatures lose their sting, not so much from their inherent harmlessness as because they seem to us in these days so remote of origin and inapplicable, as rather to provoke our hilarity than excite our resentment. Thus, when your Frenchman in his futile effort to prove him a barbarian puts in the mouth of the stage Englishman, "Godam, I will sell my wife at Smithfield," or other similar traditional imbecilities, we are tempted to laugh at what we consider the ludicrous ignorance of the French writer, rather than to take offence at the obvious offensiveness implied. In judging these matters, therefore, one should distinguish between intention and effect, and recollect that when a foreigner makes a desperate attempt to plunge the blade of his satire into the British breast it frequently recoils upon himself in a shower of ridicule, while

similarly when we deny the occasional or remote practices among ourselves which have given rise to the original caricature, we are guilty of the identical display of ignorance which we complain of in our neighbours over the water.

I think, therefore, it may be fairly deduced from the foregoing summary that our main complaint against the foreigner and the main indictment that he brings against us of which we have any reason to complain, may properly be classed under the objective head, nor need we trouble ourselves any more to discuss the subjective classes of caricature and invective.

Even the stay-at-home Briton, whose experience of the "Contenong" (as he calls it) is confined to Ostend, where he pervades the promenade, eats oysters at the casino, and furtively ventures at the tables a casual half-crown while not averse from declaiming against the wickedness of foreign gambling resorts—or disports himself in a gay bathing costume at "Boolong," among what he believes to be the cream of Parisian society, or, say, where his foreign acquaintance is still more circumscribed—consisting, in fact, of a day trip there and back from Ramsgate or Margate to "Cally," including one turn round the town, and two up and down on the pier—seldom, if ever, has any hesitation in expressing the most sweeping and outspoken opinions upon "them foreigners" (as they were generally styled in pre-School-Board times)—which opinions tend to confirm the notion in the hearer's mind that the said foreigners consist of a definite breed quite distinct from Englishmen, yet undistinguishable among themselves, or at any rate possessing so few traits of difference as to be unworthy of the notice of an Englishman.

But I shall at once be told, "Of course you are speaking of the ignorant and untravelled classes." Undoubtedly. It should be steadily kept before us, that in treating of a subject, which is mainly the outcome of action and reaction of popular passions and popular ignorance, we need scarcely count in the scale the travelled few, or the wealthy tourists that swarm over the Continent, fattening hotel-keepers, parading the galleries and churches, scrambling through ruins, devouring historic monuments with the help of a guide-book at high pressure, and herding together in British hotels where natives scarce dare

penetrate, or at other seasons invading whole towns till they have driven out the native element and established a truly British pandemonium of loudness and vulgarity, tempered by lawn tennis, golf, and cricket, yachting, and bag-fox hunting; where Americans help to swell the rag tail and bobtail, and evict the harmless foreigner from his native soil, leaving only a handful of "declassés" behind, whose high-sounding titles, mostly self-bestowed, lure the gilded Chicago heiress with forty thousand horse-power, diversified with broken-down Parisian turfites (also heavily titled for the Anglo-Saxon market) who, having been warned off the Continental race-courses, have no other resources than to cheat Englishmen or Americans of their superfluous cash under the fictitious pretext of love of sport! Such as these have no share in making or marring our name in foreign parts; and why? simply because the press, the paid, the venal, and everywhere venomous daily newspapers, are the sole and continuous agency upon which is borne the vast body of tradition, subjective and objective, imaginary or real, culled or invented {from a thousand unknown sources, just as the ocean tide that sweeps between continents, bearing on its bosom the wealth of the world as well as the rubbish that it scours from every creek, bay, and harbour that lies in its path. Nay, further, the currents of the sea are traced and known, whereas who shall trace the currents of the human mind and the thousand rivulets of human opinion that trickle down, unnoticed and uncared for into the whirlpool of public opinion? All we can do is to sift it as best we can from the newspapers of the world, and by averaging their contents and their correlative expressions in the mouths of average men of all classes, strike a common measure of uniformity which will give us the average public view of Englishmen in this or that country, or at any rate the view which mainly predominates—and upon this base our philosophy. It matters nothing whether this body of tradition is scraped from the sewers, or scavenged in the streets, or ferried through Countesses' boudoirs, suffice it that it is there, and in the well-known saying of the French writer, "It is mud, and it will stick." Let us first, then, consider the nature of the mud as we find it; not that of the imagination which is subjective, but real, hard, adhesive, unpleasant, stinking mud, which stings as it hits



you, in short, the rotten eggs of continental unpopularity. Then let us fairly weigh truth and untruth and make up our minds "to be or not to be!" that is: Are we for ever to be as foreigners see us, or not to be as foreigners see us?—"That is the question!"

If it can be shown that nearly every grain of this unpleasant mud is made up of solid truths and facts that not one of us dare dispute, though possibly cemented together and coloured by Anglophobia, may I not hope to effect a breach in that self-complacency which is a by-word among the nations, our "triple brass" of self-esteem, our "seven-hided shield" of insularity?

The first step to improvement is conviction, the next—reformation. Could I but hope that England, as a mass, should be penetrated as I am with the undoubted fact that every action, every imprudent word, every foolish and thoughtless expression of opinion or conduct expressed in the presence of a foreigner, goes to swell the bad opinion that he already has of Englishmen and Englishwomen, and remember that every living Englishman and woman is responsible each in his own degree and measure for that Continental Anglophobia, which, if pushed to its extreme limit, must undoubtedly end in a war which may terminate in our total destruction or dismemberment, I shall have done much to deserve well of my country. But that is not all.

In the eloquent words of the Roman sage, "*Esse quam videri*," should be our only rule of conduct, as it is the only aspiration worthy of a great nation.

How many of us think that it matters not what our conduct may be so long as we appear well in the eyes of the world. As with private individuals so with nations. It is a vain error to believe that the world can be so easily deceived.

It is essential not only to behave well before the foreigner, as so many of us think is all that is necessary—but also in all our relations with him. In order to defeat the view in which we are now held we must be such as we were in the days of old, if we wish to restore our character and reputation to that which we held in the past.

Are we going backwards? or, at any rate, from bad to worse? "There's the rub!"

My pains and your patience, dear reader, will surely be amply

repaid if every Englishman who reads these lines will balance the arguments, for and against, fairly in his mind, and then say to himself, "How far have I contributed to this result by commission or omission? How far can I accuse myself of having neglected opportunities of lifting my voice against acknowledged national defects and national habits in the society of Englishmen?"

"With desolation is the earth made desolate,  
Because there is no man that thinketh in his heart."

How well this beautiful sentence expresses the feelings of every true lover of his country. The psalmist does not say "thinketh in his mind," for that might be but a mere passing mental spark. It is not enough to say that we love our country, but we must prove it. So, when we speak of it and for it, we must think in our hearts, that is, we must think of it as the parent should of his child, not for pleasure or gain, or for something to say, but out of the fulness of his heart. As Shakespeare so admirably says, "You men say more, swear more, but indeed your oaths are little more than words, for still we see much in your vows but little in your love." And here it seems to me that we arrive at the very root of the matter. How commonly we hear people say that Jones or Smith has been so long abroad that he is satisfied with nothing in England. Again, how common it is to hear others exclaim that so-and-so is ever speaking ill of his own countrymen, with possibly a casual reference to the well-known Scotch Proverb, "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest." Now, philosophically speaking, is there not a strong antecedent improbability, in view of the well-known tendency of all natives to repel and dislike reflections upon their own country that, were they not impelled by the desire of amending their fellow-countrymen, they should press these subjects upon them when they know that there is nothing more irritating and unpopular? And here let me remark that though Englishmen enjoy hearing their country ill spoken of by travellers of other nations, and scarcely ever take it ill though they be criticised ever so harshly, they bitterly resent the same criticism on the part of their fellow-countrymen. The former peculiarity seems to be inherent in human nature in all countries and all times, but the latter is, I believe, a weakness peculiar to Englishmen. In some countries the love of home is stronger than in others, such as in Scotland

for instance, Dr. Johnson remarking (as per Boswell), "There is a conspiracy against truth amongst all Scotchmen to exalt their native land." This feeling I believe to be weaker in our own land than any other, and is one that is usually attributed by foreigners to the impenetrability of our insular conceit.

Consider, too, that Englishmen who have settled and lived long in any part of the globe usually become weaned, so to speak, from their old habits and ways to that extent that scarcely any of them wish to return, and such as do return are for the most part utterly wretched, and wish themselves heartily back again in the land of their adoption. No doubt the answer from many would come pat, "Habit is a second nature, and after a certain age a man cannot easily adopt new habits." In my early days I used to think such was the case; but further examination seems to show the contrary, since at all ages of life and in respect of all classes this tendency alike applies.

I have generally found, whether it be the young man without education going afield to seek his bread, or an educated scholar teaching his language or earning a living at the expense of his brains, or, again, even the inevitable "globe-trotter," so long as he dwells in any country long enough to master its language, and have serious relations with its inhabitants—I know no exception to the same invariable rule that his valuation of English ways and thoughts and habits undergoes a rapid revolution while loving the foreigner no better than before or (as may be easily guessed) without consciously accepting his standard. Is this to count for nothing? If the same thing were noticed in denizens of other lands one would think no more of the matter, and possibly ascribe it to some inscrutable habit common to all humanity; but surely it is conspicuously the reverse with other nations. Your Frenchman or German, your Italian organ-grinder, or your Alsatian cook, counts the days like a school-boy who yearns for cessation of study in order to return to the parental home. He endures separation from fatherland not for present happiness but for gain and future prosperity. His dream is—if a working man—to buy some snug cot on the side of the Apennines and cultivate his little vineyard, or may be to smoke his pipe under the humble roof-tree of the familiar Bier-garten far from the fogs of Albion, where he has gathered a competence

in discomfort and sadness. Nor can the foreigner be induced to either care for, or study, or learn, or sympathise ever so little with the British atmosphere in which he is forced to gain his bread. He is profoundly unhappy if he does not live, as near as may be, according to the ways of his own country. He adopts no British habit except under absolute compulsion, and when he leaves, he cares and knows no more about them than when he first came among them to earn his bread.

Are we to consider, then, that Englishmen—taking one class with another—are more receptive, more acutely alive to the advantages that foreigners possess over Englishmen, or more sympathetic, that is, affectionate in their disposition, than their continental neighbours? Surely not, unless, indeed, all history and experience is fraudulent and mendacious! Or again, is he of such pliant and soft disposition that he allows, as a rule, men of other lands to persuade him that the moon is made of green cheese?

There remains, therefore, as far as I can see, no alternative except to conclude that your Englishman undergoes no transformation that can account for his change of disposition by a transference from England to foreign climes. “*Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt,*” says Horace, and consequently, we are forced to the conclusion that there must be at least something incomplete or deficient in our own insular system.

If this be the case, would it not be well to seriously consider whether the united consensus of Europe—which is undeniably against us—together with the unbiassed and, so to speak, instinctive inclination of the Briton as soon as he is cut off from the atmosphere of his own country, does not form an overwhelming body of testimony in the same direction? It would also seem to follow that so far from hostile criticism being reprehensible where reason seems to point out that outside criticism is specially desirable, no new lights that can be thrown upon the causes of acknowledged facts should be neglected, and the inference to be drawn from such facts ought rather to be sought for eagerly, than contemptuously set down to an envious and carping spirit.

The silver streak that from time immemorial has been reckoned

alike our salvation and our pride, has probably been also the cause of our inaccessibility to the opinion of civilised nations. It should be remembered that while during these last fifty years of our national life there is no people—unless, perhaps, our American cousins—who devour more eagerly the news of the world, and who telegraph and disperse more energetically the latest foreign events to the four winds of heaven—but a very short while ago, when the said silver streak was a very real and effective bar to foreign connection, our countrymen of sixty years ago, like Gallo, cared nothing for these things, and in their rough and manly fashion lived their own life and framed their own habits with an absolute disregard of foreign opinion and a stern dislike of innovation, which if it displeased, at any rate impressed, our foreign friends in the highest degree.

Then came the triumph of Waterloo, and, thereafter, John Bull lost his head entirely. From that evil hour—intoxicated with success, his wits overbalanced in his new-found pride of leading the “European Concert,” the fatal desire to strut abroad and show the foreigner that—in the touching words of the music-hall ditty—“he’d got the ships, and got the men, and got the money too”—was too much for him. He pervaded Europe with his top boots and his leather breeches, and for the first time paraded his women-kind to the eye of the astonished foreigner. “*Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*” Female fashions being then at their most preposterous height, consisting of a British adaptation of a Greek tunic closely resembling a meal sack tied in the middle, a style little calculated to develop the latent beauties of the slim damsels of Britain, not unnaturally evolved the lanky Mees of the Continental stage. Add to this agreeable picture the libellous corkscrew curls of lively auburn hue and teeth of prodigious length, and we can easily realise how the patriotic Frenchman sought to revenge himself on his hereditary foe.

These remarks, which may be considered somewhat wide of the subject, might seem to require apology were it not that they are specially intended to fix the origin of a new departure; and I shall endeavour to prove that from the time when Englishmen left their natural element and sought for the first time to shine among their continental neighbours in matters social and civil—for which, as I hold, they are wholly unfitted—instead of as

before, standing proudly aloof and confining themselves to matters military and naval, and commercial, out of which they had built up their fame—a steady, conspicuous, and continuous backsliding has set in, which, if not brought home to the English people and sedulously fought against, would seem likely to bring us to the pass to which so many other nations have been brought, and which our volatile friends over the water style “Decadence.”

John Bull of the ante-Waterloovian period was a thoroughly respectable and respected European figure. He had the reputation of being liberal with his cash (whence the invariable “milord” and its numerous traditions), and as ready with his oaths as with his fists. If you search the contemporary literature of Europe you will generally see him represented as a man of infinite self-possession, calm, proud, loud-voiced and overbearing to be sure, but good-tempered withal; and if rough of manners and speech, yet a man whose word was as good as his bond.

Where are we now? Ask of contemporary literature during the last fifty years! “What a change is there, my countrymen!”

Are we to persist in believing, contrary to common sense, experience and history, that for some unseen purpose and inscrutable end all the nations of the world are in open conspiracy to defame us? Yet this is the attitude of most of my fellow-countrymen.

Again I repeat the first step towards reformation is to see our own faults. The second is for each one of us to be determined in his measure to expose, deprecate and denounce, in public and private, in season and out of season, every tendency, and eliminate every element of our modern life which he is satisfied must contribute, not indeed to our depreciation in the eyes of foreigners, but to the downfall of our Empire; for I cannot sufficiently urge that “*Esse quam videri*” should be our only motto, and that it is idle and vain to attempt to appear to foreign eyes other than what we really are.

It was observable but lately, when the subject of Anglo-phobia upon the continent was so hotly discussed in our English Press, that the prevailing if not universal view of our apologists was that in the first place our continental friends dislike us for purely subjective reasons, mainly attributable to

their want of perception, logic, or good taste, and not to any shortcomings of our own. Secondly, if there were any such shortcomings, or even any grounds for seeming to be guilty of such, the remedy was plainly to be sought in a more careful display of those external forms which, according to many authorities, formed the chief groundwork of their complaints. Finally, all concurred in the view that the bulk of the accusations brought against us, and the grounds suggested in explanation, were in great part imaginary, and wholly founded on jealousy or commercial hostility: while among all the various correspondents who pressed eagerly their own particular explanation as being the one and only cause of a manifestation to which all history can afford no parallel, it is at least remarkable that there were none with sufficient philosophy to suggest that such widespread sentiments could not but have originated in a multiplicity of causes, any more than the ocean could subsist without being fed from countless brooks and rivulets.

Some glimpse of the real truth seemed to have penetrated the scribblers of the Press when attempting to describe, however feebly, the glories of Mafeking Day. I had the misfortune, or, from a philosophical point of view, the advantage, of personally viewing that extraordinary aberration of British intelligence, which prompted even the most indifferent to exclaim that not even the most excitable nations in Europe could have afforded a more unedifying spectacle, while others judiciously remarked that such a display could only be produced by some strange transformation in our national character.

So it seems that our all-seeing and all-knowing instructors; the guardian angels who watch over our every interest; the gods by whom we swear; our Phœbus Apollo, without whose leave no Briton dares to call his soul his own; in short, the penny papers, Britain's tribunal of last appeal in all questions of faith and morals, have at last confessed to a lurking suspicion of a fact to which the literature of every country in Europe, including our own, bears abundant testimony.

The precise date when this national change took place matters nothing, whether at the battle of Waterloo—as I am inclined to think—or shortly after, when we first entered upon that political competition, which may be described as putting up political

power to auction, through which we have arrived in a hundred years, namely, from George III. to Edward VII., from an almost despotic monarchy to the most irresponsible and ill-balanced republic with a king for a figure-head, that the world ever saw. Nor need the contributing causes greatly concern us at present. Personally I incline to the belief that one of the strongest causes of this undoubted and radical change in the British character must be largely sought in the change from soothing, solid, stolid, beer-drinking to noxious, nefarious, nerve-destroying tea, and the national adoption of the cigarette.

Among continental nations the Hungarians have the reputation of being the most hot-headed and impatient of offence and bad government of any people living, as well they might be, being the purest oriental blood in Europe, directly descended as they are from the fiery Huns of the North. Yet an Hungarian (who had been brought up at Eton and largely frequented London society) once told me that he considered Englishmen the most excitable race with which he was acquainted.

I am aware that the few French newspapers whose columns were not filled with abuse and vituperation, expressed their surprise at the calm stolidity with which we received the many reverses which were sustained at the opening of the Boer campaign, and some went so far as to contrast them favourably with the attitude of the French under similar circumstances. Alas! it is to be hoped that they were not spectators of the Mafeking epilogue, or I greatly fear that their admiration of our stoical calm in the early stages of the war (which, as far as my observation went, closely resembled a state of general paralysis and blank despair) would speedily be changed into one of undisguised contempt.

As I walked the streets of London on that day the prevailing sentiment in my mind was one of anxious solicitude lest any foreigner should chance to see us. Alas! for our antique pride; alas! for the calm dignity, the "phlegme Britannique" of other days!

To return to our muttons. It is not our frivolity, or our light-headedness, or our excitability, or even that paramount and most fatal of all our vices, social and financial recklessness, the spirit of gambling, if you will, that troubles the foreigner or raises his ire: it is not even our conceit, though many who have



closely studied the subject give it that name, it is our unmeasured and illimitable self-complacency which lashes the foreigner to the verge of madness. More wonderful still it is to note, that, contrary to what one might expect of human nature, contrary to all analogy and all that is probable and reasonable, it is not the Offensive, the Aggressive, the Positive, so much as the Passive, the Impersonal, the Intangible, which seems to irritate the foreigner beyond the bounds of reason.

The open childlike brag of the Gascon, the "Longbow" of the North American, the vulgar ostentation of the Brazilian, the haughty pride of the Castilian, the overbearing roughness of the Prussian, all this can be contended with, rebutted and snubbed as occasion requires; but that the nation who in the eyes of all the other members of the European flock, whether from average specimens culled abroad, or from the depressing tone of the English books which they seem specially to affect and translate, or by reason of our diplomatic representatives who are said to shine by their conspicuous dulness in every court of Europe, or a mixture of all these causes, have somehow contrived to give us a character by no means flattering to our intellectual and social qualities—should swagger about Europe in their worst clothes to show their contempt for everything outside their own country, elbowing the natives out of their own railway carriages, crowding them out of their own hotels, or criticising them in their loudest tones in hotel, street or railway carriage, as if no one but themselves could possibly understand their own language, pervading their monuments and churches with a Murray or a Baedeker in their hand, for the most part selecting the hours of public service—their conversation, if any, usually turning upon the superior advantages enjoyed by their own nation, coupled with a lofty disregard of snub, retort or argument—all this and much more go to make up a combination so incongruous and inscrutable as to fill the foreigner's bosom with anger and despair. "But why incongruous?" it will be said. "Surely there is nothing remarkable in the fact that the all-conquering Briton strolling abroad for his pleasure should criticise this and frown at that, dispensing his favour and displeasure at his own sweet will in the free exercise of his natural liberty?" To explain this seeming mystery, though

clear as the noon-tide sun to those who know the inner mind of Europe, nothing but a review of European literature for the last 400 years would suffice, together with a complete compendium of modern literature. Enough to say that, roughly speaking, the Roman race look upon their own culture and civilisation as the only one worth mentioning. We are too apt to forget—nay, I know not how we are to learn from English books or where—that whatever civilisation we have received has gradually filtered to us through France from the extreme east of Europe. When Rome and Florence were filled with palaces, we were scarce removed from savages ; when the mansions of Venice were hung with gorgeous paintings, costly tapestries and all the splendour of the East, our Henry VIII. and his nobles revelled and caroused in pestilential hovels like St. James's Palace, with mud-baked floors strewn with rushes or fresh straw, hung with villainous tapestries of the coarsest kind, or boarded with rough-hewn panels to hide its rough-cast walls.

Then as for our literature and arts, where were they a hundred years ago, where are they now, but for the foreigner ?

“ What about Shakespeare ? ” you will say, “ or Sir Isaac Newton ? ” Precisely ; Bacon, Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, in their several spheres of philosophy, literature and science, according to the European verdict, are pretty nearly all we have to boast of. I do not say they are right, but there is the fact. Nor are they so very far wrong when they grudge us the fame which rests upon the production of these great men. For what would Bacon have done without Roman and Italian literature and philosophy ? Shakespeare, too (upon the supposition that it was not Bacon but Shakespeare who wrote those magnificent plays before whose genius all nations bow down), did he not go to Italy for his inspiration ? Is there scarce a story or a play, excepting his English historical plays, which are not based upon Italian or Spanish drama ? In short, the collective European mind regards true civilisation and culture as wholly and entirely a Roman appanage, confined to members of the Roman race and tongue ; just as the Greeks considered their civilisation so perfect, their arts and graces so superior to all around, that to them the outer circles of the world were barbarians, whose language and habits seemed so contemptible,

that they deemed, just as the Chinese still do to the present hour, the habits and ways of other lands scarce worthy of their attention. And lest I should be thought to exaggerate, to this day does not your Frenchman and your Italian invariably class the English and Russians together precisely as the Romans of the Augustan age when they spoke of the distant tin islands of Britain, and of the ice-bound Scythians, or northern Russians, as if they were, as probably they really were, in the same category of civilisation. "Is it not in a great measure a geographical confusion of mind," I shall be told, "arising from our equidistant position from what they please to consider the centre of culture?" Personally, I incline to that belief. So persistent, however, are traditions, especially when adverse to others and flattering to ourselves, that it is more than probable that Horace, or Ovid, or Virgil's careless geography, crystallising itself in the literature of Italy and France, has been the original cause of this undoubted, if monstrous, nay ludicrous combination, the more ludicrous and irritating when we think that Russia has scarcely yet stepped across the border of civilisation and is but a mushroom of yesterday with an authentic history scarce three hundred years old, while our own country has played a brilliant part in Christendom since the days of King Alfred.

"But how about the Germans, where do they come in? Are they outer barbarians like ourselves?" I shall be asked. It must be confessed that Frederick of Prussia did an excellent turn to Germany when he invited Voltaire to remodel his schools and transplant French culture wholesale into the barrack squares of Germany. Far be it from me to argue that they did themselves any good in faith or morals thereby; but this they certainly did attain, viz. a place in the European comity. No sooner had Maria Theresa of Austria and Frederick of Prussia come to the conclusion that no improvement was possible but through wholesale importation of an alien civilisation than—with whatever loss to national character—the portals of European culture were thrown wide open, and Germany *en bloc* was welcomed within the inner barriers of polite Europe, from which she had up to that date been rigorously excluded.

Odious and contemptible as it is, I think history would bear

out the accuracy of this observation, that only through the Caudine forks of slavish Franco-Italian imitation can a European nation hope to break through the deep-set tradition which gives to Rome alone the monopoly of culture. So firm is the determination to exclude us from participation in the European comity that it is even urged in explanation of the seeming impossibility of so barbarous a nation having produced a man like Shakespeare, that Shakespeare must not be reckoned as an Englishman. "He is one of those exceptional minds like the Corsican Napoleon," they tell us, "he is of no country and no race, but a citizen of the world!"

To those who have done me the honour to follow me closely in this brief sketch in explanation of the preposterous and ungenerous point of view taken up by not only the lawful inheritors of the civilisation of Rome but even by our upstart German cousins who but yesterday were on a worse footing than our own, who nevertheless eagerly join in the hunt as if their position were equally assured with their nobler rivals—let us for a moment consider what our feelings would be if our Zulu friends from the Cape, puffed up with their earnings in our ill-gotten Transvaal gold mines, were to take it into their heads to don tall hats and varnished boots, or a straw hat and knickerbockers, and saunter about Charing Cross, criticising the National Gallery or the British Museum, or making unfavourable remarks about Westminster Abbey, or drawing comparisons between the civilisation of London and that of Natal—and you can easily guess the indignation and disgust of the Continental when the bold Briton stalks abroad to air his own superiority and contempt by that display of "Nil admirare" which he usually considers to be the acme of refinement and culture. To complete the picture, it must be borne in mind that his remarks—so far as their taste and discrimination are concerned—are usually little better entitled to respect than those of the gentlemen from Zululand aforementioned.

For if there is one thing that our countrymen specially distinguish themselves by the absence of, it is TASTE. Now taste must not be confused with a similar word with a different meaning, which, through the unfortunate poverty of our language, is, I verily believe, the cause of more fundamental æsthetic

error than almost any other. When treating of it (as I hope to do later) I see no method of better handling the subject than by successfully disproving its existence among us by the consideration of the many admitted practices which are in direct defiance of taste. For the present it suffices to declare what I think will be the general opinion among Englishmen, that one important department of taste consists in a correct appreciation of ourselves and our own qualities—to know what we are, and what we are not.

When I have seen the epithet “stupid” applied to our nation by the various scribblers of the European Press with an unanimity which is as striking as it is unpleasant, I have invariably spent much time in considering how I could deduce from the context or the subject in hand a clear idea of the cause and origin of what I used to consider a wholly unwarrantable and preposterous title. I have even analysed closely the word “stupid” in its original Latin sense in hopes of deriving some grain of comfort. Subsequently in later years, gaining a more perfect and intimate acquaintance with the various equivalents among the various Latin nations, without being precisely consoled by the information obtained, I perceived that the signification attached to that unpleasant word differs somewhat in every Latin country in proportion as they approach to or depart from the original tongue. Proceeding as it does from the word “*stupeo*,” which means to grow torpid or to be moonstruck (which I take to be the closest equivalent), a condition of amazement or bewilderment rather than mental density is supposed. Contrary to the prevailing opinion, and if one may judge even from clever translations, contrary to the common belief, it must be remembered that very few words even when derived from a common origin bear precisely the same meaning in the mouths of different nations. If, however, I have a right conception of the word “stupid” in English, which I take to be a condition of complete absence of sense and reason—“stupid” has not a meaning quite so objectionable in the Roman tongues as in our own, and in its application to ourselves in the unpleasant term “*ce peuple stupide*,” or “*cette nation stupide*” does not imply what we understand by the bare English counterpart, viz. “a stupid people,” or “a stupid nation,” but that condition of mind,

which, whether applicable or not to the great bulk of my fellow-countrymen in their outlook abroad, constitutes the great question between ourselves and our Continental neighbours.

Of all the prominent writers with which I am acquainted, Thackeray—who was about as “Frenchified” and as saturated with French feeling in his earlier days as an Englishman could possibly be—seems to have had the keenest perception of something wrong about his fellow-countrymen, as displayed by his irritating and most unconvincing satires upon English society, from highest to lowest, under the aspect of “Snobbery,” with which he has immortally connected his name. Had he plainly laid down the principles upon which his satire was founded, and defined the limits of what he seemed rather to feel than discover to be a national defect of our nation, his large and copious efforts in that direction, coming to us as they did with the authority of so popular a writer, would have obtained very important results. Possessing, however, a singularly unphilosophical mind, and being essentially a caricaturist rather than a censor of current morals, the effect produced upon his hearers was rather that of a disappointed man who for some fancied slight lost no opportunity to pour out upon the society which he depicted the contempt and venom with which his soul overflowed.

Perhaps “stupefaction,” in the sense of imperfect apprehension without any tincture of appreciation, brings before us the precise shade of meaning attributed to it by our Continental friends in the clearest and highest degree. It may be understood to be that frame of mind in which two farmers in the inimitable pages of “Brown, Jones and Robinson,” appeared to the admiring eyes of their fellow-countrymen in their travels down the Rhine, and in my private experience is well typified by a Cook’s tourist who sat by my side at an hotel in Naples and confidentially remarked to me that had it not been for his wife’s desire to talk about the “Continong” no power on earth would ever have drawn him away from Pangbourne, for he said, “They drags me hout of one mooseum into another, through one church and then hover one of these here picture galleries, and hout of one hotel into another, till I don’t know whether I stand on my ’ead or my ’eels; and as for their food, I’m blowed if I’ve ’ad what I calls a good honest meal since I left my ’ome in Pangbourne.” I took great

pleasure in cross-questioning my friend, as he seemed to be a singularly hard-headed, sensible, average Briton, by no means deficient in the solids, while wholly devoid of what may be called the ornaments of education. The prevailing impression produced upon me by this—as I may call him—central type of an Englishman, was that his attitude towards foreigners generally, whom he delighted in classing in a lump (precisely as I have so often been deeply irritated by hearing Hindoos and Chinese similarly deliver themselves in our own regard) as “them furriners,” for whom as well as for their habits and language he neither knew nor cared, but enjoyed a firm, unhesitating, and undisguised contempt. There will be many who will say, “Here you take as an example a man without an “H,” or if he has one puts it in the wrong place; surely this is not a fair specimen?” To this I reply that he and such as he, “H” or no “H,” probably supplies nine-tenths of modern travel, and consequently, for every one that departs from this type to any essential degree, there will be nine possessed of most of this man’s leading characteristics.

Nor are the ladies by any means behindhand in their porcupine-like attitude towards everything foreign. The Duke’s womankind down to the much despised ‘Arry and ‘Arriet of comic lore, differ in their main features to a very slight degree. I have studied them closely “in season and out of season,” and it is my firm and unalterable conviction that the vast majority of Britons and Britonesses, to say nothing of our American cousins, who come over to “do” Europe, are animated by no conceivable purpose beyond that so straightforwardly expressed by our friend from Pangbourne, even though expressed in different language; while the effect upon themselves and consequently upon the foreigners with whom they have mingled is almost precisely similar. From the moment they leave their native shores to the moment they return to the stale buns and dubious tea which greet them on landing at Dover, their main topic of conversation is the dissimilarity and as a natural consequence the inferiority of everything foreign to everything English—the great want of “Comfort” abroad as compared with what they enjoy at home, and the deplorable political, social, moral and religious condition of foreigners generally, and their ignorance of British civilisation as specially evinced in the article

of tea, fill their mouths and hearts to the exclusion of all attempts to derive benefit and instruction.

Now were this bedazement, which has earned us the unpleasant title of a collectively stupid nation, held to imply a stupefaction of the intellect at the superiority of other nations over ourselves, depend upon it there would be no complaint. The "Causa gravaminis" is widely different! For it mainly consists in nothing less than stupefaction at the inferiority of everything foreign to everything British; so that in the overwhelming majority of cases the Briton and Britoness come home more British than he or she set out, and more firmly convinced than ever according to the shortness and the quickness of their trip (always supposing that they do not live very long in any spot or master the language completely and form a large foreign acquaintance, in which latter case they generally rush into the opposite extreme)—that (to repeat once more the immortal language of "Brown, Jones, and Robinson")—"the whole thing is a do and a sell."

Lastly, to sum up, this frame of mind, coupled with a serene conviction of our own superiority in every conceivable respect, which is so obvious (to ourselves, at any rate) that it is not worth disputing or arguing about, combined with that want of taste which not only prevents our sympathising with the foreigner but from making any attempt, internal or external, to hide or bridge the abyss that yawns between us, represents an inability to perceive the beam in our own eye while criticising the mote in our neighbour's, which fills the foreigner with rage and indignation. For, argues he (with what truth I leave to my discriminating readers to judge), "Where are these institutions of which Britions are so proud? Which of them can be said to be perfect? Nay, which of them is not opposed to every Continental canon and consequently eminently undesirable?" And in proof of this they add, "Is there an institution of whatever kind which has not been heartily denounced high and low by the most accredited British writers? Are they really honest when they criticise all our institutions while they are for ever grumbling at their own? Must we not to that diabolical pride, that 'morgue' which besets them added to that 'splin' by which they are tormented, look for that intolerable attitude which they



assume upon the Continent, which is wholly unjustified by facts and even by the testimony of their own writings? from which it surely follows that they are either conspiring to hide from us their deplorable condition by an affected superiority, or else are too stupid to properly appreciate the immensity of the beam in their own eye: in any case they are a stupid people, since in the former case they try stupidly to deceive us, and in the latter they stupidly deceive themselves."

But is it so certain that we do really deceive ourselves? Are we as a nation prone to live in what is called a Fool's Paradise? If so, Englishmen's conversation, when the foreigner is not present, is exceedingly misleading; for nothing is more remarkable than the freedom with which the average Briton denounces within the walls of his own sanctuary, nay in his favourite papers, the habits and shortcomings of his nation.

The enormous divergence between our private talk and our public utterances is an essential and striking English peculiarity. I have heard the same man, who, in private conversation, will talk as if Englishmen collectively were the biggest fools on earth, stand before a public audience and glorify himself and themselves collectively and individually, congratulating his audience upon their civic virtues and intrinsic merits without so much as a blush or a suspicion that he was deviating in the slightest degree from the path of rectitude and truth. But is not this again a further manifestation of a stupid people? For surely none but a stupid people would care to hear themselves collectively praised for being the finest people under the sun, or would desire to hear nothing better in a public hall than an exaggerated statement of virtues which they know to be wholly fictitious and non-existent. Would they not rather express their strong distaste and disgust for such fulsome encomiums, and by word and action signify to those who address them that they preferred plain truths to senseless adulation?

Another strange circumstance may be adverted to before we proceed further to the consideration of the points to which our criticism should be mainly directed. There are two supreme and preponderating qualities which the whole of Europe ungrudgingly concede to us; first, our commercial superiority and mechanical ingenuity (of late largely shared by our American

cousins who are treading fast on our heels in European esteem); secondly, our system of popular government as especially displayed in our colonial successes.

Now I imagine that if most Englishmen were polled upon this head, the general verdict would be extremely adverse to our pretensions of possessing the secret of government in its greatest perfection. Take any of the provincial papers—I care not in what part of England—and it is ten to one that the greatest part of the written articles and letters therein contained will consist of strong denunciations of the tricks, or speculations, or shortcomings of one or other Government Party, or one or other governing body in the town or city where the paper is edited. Listen to a knot of interested talkers in any commercial hotel, or at any place of public resort, and it will be a marvel if the subject of attack or controversy be not the last financial or other scandal connected with public maladministration. No doubt this condition of things may result in great measure from the strong party spirit infused into the national system of politics. The patriot is lost in the politician. The Tory forgets that the Whig is as much an Englishman as he is; and the intensity of the rivalry between opposing parties produces a condition almost similar to civil war. On the other hand, the strong tendency to mitigate and defend the errors and excesses of the party to which one belongs produces an excessive severity towards the Opposition and disables the average politician from distinguishing calmly between right and wrong. It would seem that quarrelling and strife are so inherent in human nature that from the time that we Englishmen no longer had occasion to struggle with the crown, that is roughly, since James II.'s time, and possibly also because we felt that we had no right to grumble at a king of our own choosing, our political activities had been deflected from incessant bickerings with the Crown to incessant internecine conflicts between Whig and Tory. I know that there are many who look upon party politics as being the mainstay of the British Constitution; they consider that just as the sluggish river becomes filled with mud and turbid if not stirred by dividing rocks and alternate deeps and shallows, so the political life of a nation requires the stimulus of passion and strong emotion to prevent the dull stagnation into which it would otherwise fall.

We can now hardly realise the condition of things that followed upon the dismissal of the Stuarts, when for nearly a hundred years a large body of the best of a nation were firmly, if not openly, opposed to the existing Government, not so much upon general or even upon moral grounds, as upon a bare and simple preference for the discarded dynasty; and yet such is the perversity of human nature, that, looking through the contemporary literature of the past, paradoxical as it may seem, one is struck with the fact that the moment the politicians had less to quarrel about, they seemed to quarrel the more; that is, as soon as Tory adversaries were reduced almost to zero, political ferocity and hatred rose to its highest point under the placid if uneventful early years of George III.: so that, although the Pretender's followers had long since fallen away or died out, you will hear such men as Dr. Johnson deny all possibility of honesty, order or justice proceeding from a Government of Whigs.

When the foreigner in a generous mood descants upon the one and only superiority which he admits in us, and desperately attempts to pronounce "the British Constitution,"—to use a vulgar phrase—"he has the wrong sow by the ear." For in the first place we have, strictly speaking, no constitution at all. That high-sounding phrase "British Constitution" which has too often proved a stumbling-block to after-dinner eloquence appears to move many Britons to ecstasies of self-congratulation apparently upon the same principle as that which moved the old woman who when asked what she had understood of a somewhat high-flown sermon, replied, that she "thought a lot of that blessed word Mesopotamia." Perhaps the chief beauty of our so-called Constitution or at any rate its special suitability to Englishmen is the fact of its not being a constitution at all, but rather a congeries of maxims, habits and sayings, of such extreme elasticity as to suit all times and all cases, and mixed with as little intelligible principles as will serve to hold it together, in fact a very similar jumble to what we dignify with the name of Law, the chief merit of which seems to consist in a total absence of order, regularity, or principle, three things apparently repugnant to the British mind.

For centuries the excitable and unruly heirs of Roman civilisation, not unnaturally envying our comparatively unbroken

share of peace and prosperity—perhaps partly from national vanity, and partly from their deep-seated belief in the efficacy of logical systems, have confused the instrument with the user and sought an explanation of our success in the wrong direction.

The truth is that it is not our political but our physical and mental constitution to which our comparative freedom from revolutions and civil dissension must be ascribed. Roughly speaking, the British race is a compound of Dane and Saxon grafted upon a Celtic stock. As flowers and fruit display the character and qualities of the graft rather than the stock ingrafted, so the heterogeneous blood of Northern Germany and Scandinavia strongly predominated except in certain portions of Wales, north and west Scotland, and western Ireland, with the result that although the greater portion of wealth and power with nearly all the land fell to the successful Normans, the overpowering “vis inertia” of what we call the Saxon element has invariably prevailed over the Norman vivacity of our rulers. Let our enemies call it bovine stupidity if they will, and certainly it looks uncommonly like it when we consider that such prosperity as we have attained was assuredly not derived from the exertions of the downtrodden People, who, till yesterday, enjoyed no share of power or influence until it was thrust into their unwilling hands for party purposes—let us, however, assume a virtue if we have it not, and call it Stability at all events in the presence of the foreigner.

Thus even our faults at times may prove a source of safety. A witty Frenchman said that most men have the quality of their defects. Here we perceive that our chief defect so closely counterfeits a quality as to have succeeded in hoodwinking the jealous and critical foreigner these four hundred years or more. Surely this should be a matter of pride to most of us. For if this characteristic of ours enabled us tenaciously to resist all attempts to tamper with our laws and political constitution and all that makes for the glory of our Motherland, such a disposition should certainly be reckoned a quality greatly to be admired: whereas, on the contrary, if our political institutions when blurred and disfigured with the grossest stains and errors, through mere force of habit or obstinacy, are hugged and cherished as a national boon of infinite price, must we not then

in all honesty denounce it as a most pernicious fault, which, when carried to excess, not only amounts to a national curse, but seems to bar the way to all national improvement!

Few better examples can be given of this tendency than a letter which appeared lately in the columns of a daily paper, where an Englishman bitterly complains of the inferiority of the refreshments afforded at Dover on landing from abroad; he was instantly answered by another indignant writer, who, while fully agreeing in every respect with the substance of the complaint, exclaims, "But it is thoroughly English! and therefore I am too patriotic to complain!" winding up by saying that he never landed at Dover without thanking Heaven he was an Englishman!

Two more examples I will give of this truly national peculiarity compounded apparently of a pig-like obstinacy and a bovine self-complacency. The former quotation may be held to disclose the wisdom of the middle classes. Let us take two similar examples from the higher and lower as well.

A Prime Minister not long ago was found to excuse the intolerable neglect of his Government in taking the commonest measures to avert or successfully carry on the war in the Transvaal by saying that he supposed "Englishmen have always muddled and mismanaged their wars in the past, and he thought it was highly probable that they always would in the future."

Again, when an impudent and most improbable impostor, called Arthur Orton, vainly endeavoured to prove himself the long-lost heir of large estates, I was assured that a working man was heard sententiously to remark to his mates, as if disposing of the entire question, "I am for the claimant, I am. I don't care whether he is the right man or not! but I likes his pluck!"

What is the moral to be drawn from these three stories? I take it that the last may be considered a genuine manifestation of what may be called a central type of Briton making a public declaration to his fellows, just as a little higher up I have recounted a similar expression of opinion in a letter to the newspapers among a superior class, each betraying amazing depths of mingled obstinacy and stupidity, and each, too, taking the form of an appeal to the verdict of their fellow-countrymen: from which it may be fairly deduced that these men are not only

honestly convinced of what they say, but also that they have reason to believe, and probably rightly so, that they have the sympathy of a very large section of their fellow-countrymen.

My quotation from the speech of an eminent statesman seems to point, by a different road, to the same conclusion. We can hardly do such injustice to a notoriously acute and far-seeing statesman as to suppose that he fairly expressed his own opinion, or his own sense of the fitness of things; there is, therefore, no other conclusion to be drawn, but that in making such a remark he felt that he was appealing to the sympathy of the greater number of his countrymen. Now, as the mathematicians say, this aforesaid sympathy equals unfathomable stupidity, ergo, he, in common with the other two samples of different classes, all unite in appealing to the enormous collective stupidity of their fellow-countrymen.—(Q.E.D.)

Having cleared the ground, I now propose to consider whether there is a *prima facie* ground for "philosophic doubt" as to whether or not the foreigner is right? Are we or are we not a stupid people? Of course, taken as individuals there can be no doubt that Britons have achieved great things. Whether it is the Norman or Celtic blood, which, with many drawbacks, invariably introduces into any nation with which it is allied great mental vivacity and indeed capacity for every variety of intellectual development, or whether it is that in our dull Saxon veins some ferment occasionally arises which lifts the individual above the common herd, there can be no doubt that individual Englishmen have attained the highest capacity in every department of human effort. Collectively, I think it may be demonstrated to the satisfaction of every unbiassed Englishman that the foreigner has ample grounds for attributing enormous stupidity to our public and national conduct as distinguished from the individuals of which that nation is composed.

I propose, then, to consider this question under various heads, from its most important aspects down to its most trivial social manifestations.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRITISH RELIGIONS

IN dealing with religion it is not easy to keep apart those branches of moral conduct which, in the public eye, are almost inextricably mingled, for example, charitable institutions, hospitals, tithes, glebes, methods of dispensing of religious preferment, philanthropic institutions for the improvement of the human race generally, such as the S.P.G., Temperance Societies, and so forth. If, therefore, I diverge from the strict confines of religious thought and polity, it may be borne in mind that while many have a strong feeling in favour of keeping these matters strictly apart and drawing a line where religion begins and philanthropy finishes, still in such a connection it will be extremely difficult to keep a strict technical boundary, where most Englishmen are only too apt to draw no distinction whatever.

Probably it will be universally admitted that we are a deeply religious people. In adverting to the special advantages with which foreign nations have credited us and our institutions generally, and to which I am inclined to attribute our national immobility or disinclination to move forward or backward, I might have added, had it not more properly come under the head of religion, that whenever we have fallen away from the enjoyment of that even and peaceful civil condition which our laws ensure, the moving cause has invariably been religion. Though the Celt may rave and rant, and the Norman plan and plot, the Saxon deadweight, uniting as it does the greater dulness with the greater numbers, usually acts in the same manner as gravitation upon bodies in violent action, that is, it speedily reduces them to impotence.

When, therefore, Religion appears amongst us with its attendant handmaids, Passion and Jealousy, by which I mean the hatred of other men's beliefs combined with a determination to proscribe them, the pent-up activities of the entire race burst forth, and a muddy pond is suddenly converted into a

roaring flood. Not that your Anglo-Saxon ever reaches the lofty heights of piety and self-sacrifice of a Bernard or a Francis of Assisi, nor produces missionaries with the superhuman self-devotion of a Xavier or a Peter Claver. Indeed some historians, in explaining the facts of the English Reformation, have gone so far as to assert that the Roman domination and the sway of the Western Church affected only the external mind of the English people, and that in adopting the Reformation they only followed their own natural bent. Whether there be any truth in this or not, no one will deny that the earlier Saxons in pre-Norman days were marvellously zealous in their attachment to the religious orders and supported them with the utmost liberality, while strangely enough it is from Norman days that the attachment of the lower and middle classes to the Church of Rome seems to have gradually melted away.

The first attack against the Church of Rome was but a skirmish upon the outworks. Wycliffe with his "Lollard" preachers stirred a very small section of the English people, and were themselves chiefly recruited among the ranks of the needy and intriguing Norman clergy. Through all these centuries, however, growing dislike and sturdy British distrust of spiritual authority was fast gaining sway, and at the first clang of the Reformation abroad, the barriers of irksome restraint which the clergy had set upon the liberties of the people were burst asunder. Your true Englishman does not love fasting. He will stand a heavy drain on his purse without murmuring, even though he likes it not; but touch him in his stomach and his religion flies up the chimney. Probably his piety, from all that we read, was never of a very high order, while on the contrary his charity seems to have been always conspicuous. The abrogation of fast days and feast days, of pilgrimages and mortification of the flesh, however, suited him exactly. No wonder that he welcomed the Reformation with open arms. Then, again, the Saxon is eminently domestic; he loves his wife and his children, and he looks askance at everybody who is not similarly provided; for being wholly devoid of imagination, he cannot believe in celibacy or self-sacrifice, or indeed anything whatsoever that cannot be measured up and felt, and bought and sold. Jealous of any authority except that which he himself has a



share in, standing up for his king to whom he always bears unflinching loyalty, John Bull never liked the interference of a foreigner as the Head of his Church. When there was an English Pope he could stretch a point; or even for a French Pope who had perhaps held a fat abbey or canonry in his own island, and perchance bore a name familiar among his own magnates at home: but for Italians and Spaniards and such like he had a profound aversion and distrust.

Henry VIII. (for none knew better his people's temper, than that wily prince) hit the nail on the head when he raised the cry of "England for the English, an English Pope in an English land."

Your true Anglo-Saxon knows nothing and cares less about logic or dogma. Foreigners he always hated and despised. Therefore it was but natural that he joyfully acclaimed the substitution as the Head of his Church of a popular king like Henry VIII. in the room of a foreigner whom he knew not, and consequently contemned.

Now the Sectaries of various kinds, especially the Brownists, and the Independents, who carefully moulded their views of worship to suit their countrymen, gave him what they called the Open Bible, which, to use the modern slang of the ring and the cycle-track, means "Go as you please." There are two elements here that please John Bull. He is not a vain man by any means, but he likes to feel he is trusted and that he can do something for himself. He never liked vicarious instruction. Though good-natured, he is suspicious. If Luther was right, he cannot see why the Rev. Jones or Brown should be more qualified than himself to understand the Word of God; and above all he is intensely jealous of his personal rights. Day after day he recites his creed, yet the Church to him is an abstraction which he completely fails to realise. He invokes the communion of the saints, and yet he does not believe in them, and probably never did; the image is too intricate for his dull comprehension to compass.

Nor did the Sectaries stop at the Open Bible. They soon found out that the silly herd which, sheep-like, followed each other into their fold, needed only the conviction of a heaven-sent message to turn them into such fanatics as Mahomet led of old. By an artful substitution of the new dispensation for

the old, they were easily inflamed by the inculcations of the Old Testament. Ignorant and credulous, they were easily persuaded by their cunning teachers that the best part of the Word of God had been sedulously kept from their knowledge by their priests of old, and that they (the Sectaries) for the first time revealed the Word of God in its fullest plenitude and truth.

In short, the fanatics who pulled down the Monarchy, as they had before baffled the cunning Cecil and the unscrupulous Walsingham, were soon turned into fanatical Jews with the ferocity of the true British bulldog breed thrown in.

It must be remembered that nothing stirs the British blood like religion. Slow and dull as he is in all other things, not even the vilest brandy or the rawest whisky will fly to his head like religion. Between forty and fifty per cent. at the present hour of our lunatics, male and female, have lost such wits as they ever possessed by getting "saved," or not "saved" as the case may be.

Therefore, when for the first time their cherished teachers read out of the holy book, once forbidden to the vulgar, the words in which the prophets of old addressed God's people, telling them they were the chosen of the Lord, destined above all other men to wear the white robes of righteousness and "hew down the sons of Belial," or "gird their loins with the sword of Agag," which meant in plain English that they were to lay about them in any direction pointed out by the aforesaid reverend teachers, can their excesses be wondered at, even if indulgence be denied?

From this source sprang the indomitable Cromwellian legions as well as the deplorable bigotry and the sectarian hatreds and intolerance which poison our land to the present hour.

The simple idea of God speaking to His people through His gospels without a mediator was plain and intelligible enough. This view your typical Englishman has passionately seized and held with astonishing tenacity, during the 17th and part of the 18th century, with whatever fatal results in the gradual depletion of the new state fold; for since no authority was irrevocable and final, each man who invented a new method of religious polity or worship found new supporters; and Englishmen, unlike any other nation as far as we know upon the earth or under the earth, found no incongruity in churches springing

up like mushrooms at the bidding of crazy cobblers or illiterate tailors. Nor is it easy to see why there should be any limit to the formation of voluntary assemblies banded together under certain limitations for purposes of prayer or other pious exercises, unless we hold fast to the belief that Christ came on earth to establish His Kingdom or Church, and that Church necessarily must be One not Many.

Everyone has heard of the witty Frenchman who remarked that the English had a hundred religions and only one sauce. The serious and thinking foreigner is utterly unable to comprehend by what process of thought Englishmen can reconcile themselves to the legal enrolment of two or three hundred churches, more especially when nearly all coincide in reverencing and most in accepting the Athanasian Creed, in which one only definite "Catholic Church" is duly recited.

"They are surely not churches," they will exclaim, "but clubs. The English have no sense of humour when they talk about or demand the serious acceptation of two or three hundred churches of God. There can only be one Church of God, that is, supposing that God has any Church at all. There is certainly room for doubt as to whether God has appointed any special body to whom He has delegated the task of preaching and teaching and carrying out His designs upon earth, or again it may be urged that there is no such Church and never was. But logic and reason stand aghast at the stupidity of a nation which sets in its Almanac between two and three hundred churches all alike claiming to be the Church of God, and the one and only fold of salvation."

The fact is that the more logical mind of the average educated foreigner refuses to entertain the notion of any but the one true fold.

"If it is not the Church of God," he says, "how can it be a Church at all, and therefore why follow it? We can understand that you make superhuman efforts to find the real Church of God, if you think it cannot be the Church of your forefathers: but what is the sense of setting up hundreds of new Churches of God of which only one can conceivably be the right one? We can readily understand how the Reformers — impatient of ecclesiastical control, and of the theory of the Catholic Church

which confides the whole care of its flock and the expounding of its Gospels to a privileged class relying upon the alleged word of Christ that He would always be with us even until the end of the world—should exclaim ‘Let us have no more mediators, there is nothing in the Gospel to warrant a go-between ’twixt Christ and sinner,’ and forthwith abolish priesthood and the hierarchy and all other forms of spiritual despotism whatsoever, or that other sectaries cry out, ‘The Gospel is plain enough for every man to read for himself.’ ‘Has not our Lord said that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in the midst of them?’ ‘Why these churches, these cathedrals, this human pomp, this splendid worship? There is nothing of all this in the Bible.’ ‘There is not a word about a Church or a Church of God in the Bible.’ True it is that he spoke of one fold and one shepherd (on which the Catholics so greatly rely), but as for any definite statement that He appointed Saint Peter the Head of that Church and that his successors for ever after should determine all questions of faith and morals—you can ransack the whole Bible without finding a word of it ! ”

So said the earliest seceders from the newly re-formed State Church. Time soon showed, however, that the No-Church theory did not pay. Of what avail to invent a new religion, without priests or officials to collect the “offerings,” or a hierarchy without fat places to strive for? Thus a new religion, whatever its original basis might be, always grew to be a “Church” with duly appointed officers for collecting purposes, whether they were called priests or ministers or Saints or Apostles.

Here some will exclaim, “Surely if the Church of Rome has erred we must set up another in her place ! ” Yet is not this a virtual impeachment of God Himself? If He *has* made a Church and intended it to last for ever, and to be the bearer of Truth and good life and true worship to men, to say that that divinely-appointed Church has erred is simply to say that God has erred. If He has *not*, by what right does man set up a new Church of His own and call it God’s? Consequently it follows that all a reasonable being can say is this: “I will not belong to the ancient Church even though it descends from Peter in direct line

through its Apostles, because I have no evidence that God ever made a Church at all, or in other words, ever appointed an invariable method of knowing Him, serving Him, and attaining eternal felicity. All I have therefore to do is to endeavour to live after His precepts, and if I choose to pray, my prayers will surely be as acceptable in the garden, or the desert, therefore, why a Church," as His own were to His Divine Father.

No wonder we hear from the bewildered foreigner, "What is the meaning of your *Church* of England, Church of Independents, of Congregationalists, Methodists, etc.? If they did not call themselves a 'Church' (as they do apparently from vanity without rhyme or reason) we could understand them: but what is this Church of England whose formularies are a mixture, one-half Catholic and the other half Lutheran, and whose Liturgy and discipline and external forms are entirely Catholic? Is it not contrary to common sense to give the name of Church to a purely State-invented Compromise with the sole object of reconciling the entire nation to one religion, and is it not sheer blasphemy to call it God's?"

"There can be no pretence in this case of Divine interference to set aright the errors of the Ancient Church, nor were even its authors respectable enough to make this probable, were such a thing possible. It was simply a substitution for political purposes and no other of a so-called Church of purely man's invention in the place of the Ancient Catholic Church of ages, which, whatever its faults or alleged errors, has unquestionably been ruled in direct succession since the time of Peter, and which, if it be truly the Church of God, would surely be able to correct its own errors and remedy its own abuses without waiting for a bad king like Henry VIII., or a queen of dubious virtue like Elizabeth to set matters straight."

Nor does the absurdity end here. "What is the meaning of this New Party" (they will ask you) "within that State-Church of yours? We hear that they are more Catholic than the Catholics, that they exaggerate even Catholic practices, and that while pretending to belong to the State Church, they are moving heaven and earth to undermine and restore it to the unity of the Papal Church. This is what we cannot comprehend. If they don't like their 'Church'—now that they are no longer forced to

stop in it, why don't they leave it? They tell us that they consider it wrong to leave the Church of their baptism, and that they do not wish to have a Pope or a foreign head to their Church. That may be, but what of the logic and reasonableness of it? What must be the condition of the minds of people who deliberately say to themselves, 'We belong to the State Church and are appointed by State-paid ministers, and yet as soon as we find ourselves on the Continent we invariably follow the practices of the Continental Churches, and loudly exclaim that we are not Protestants.' Is this madness, or is it sheer unadulterated stupidity?"

In desperately attempting to fend off the logic and contempt of the thinking foreigner, I have at last hit upon what I conceive to be the only patriotic method, however sophistical, by which we can turn aside their wrath and diminish their disgust. I answer: "You see we are independent people, unused to slavish methods and tight discipline. In England every man thinks for himself and dislikes all intellectual compulsion. Now as there are a thousand shades of human opinion upon every point, it is not wonderful that in religion so few agree, and when any number of us are found to agree, we band ourselves together and call ourselves a Church. Your Briton is an eminently clubbable person, but like all dull folk he loves big talk and high-sounding phrases, and, as is well known, his Anglo-Saxon brothers across the Atlantic are even still more inclined that way. In tiny villages you will hear the village inn dubbed 'Hotel'; and 'out West' there are few theatres that are not styled 'Opera Houses.' Their Town Hall is called 'Capitol,' their smallest Gardens—'Parks.' It will not, therefore, be wondered at that these clubs (as they may be called) of men similarly inclined in religious opinion, should band themselves together for worship with the same common views, and style themselves Churches in order to give themselves greater importance."

Whether this view will hold water or not I cannot pretend to say, suffice it that it is the only one that I have ever been able to discover, which, if not wholly satisfactory, proves an exceedingly valuable mode of scoring a temporary success, or staving off logical annihilation.

Now what is the reasonable deduction from this multiplication of so-called Churches? Why, that cunning men find in England and America a greater number of fools than elsewhere to act upon, whereby they can either acquire fame, or, as we know in the greater number of instances, large wealth, by the promulgation of their own patent variety of doctrine.

That men should believe that God has appointed for ever a person or succession of persons who should govern and direct His Church, and that that Church should be thereby guided for ever, is intelligible enough and satisfied the conscience of Europe till the fifteenth century. Then arose the doubt as to whether so worldly and powerful and magnificent a prince as he that ruled the See of Peter could really be the true representative of the humble fisherman upon earth. This it was, first and foremost—added to a dislike of foreign control—that shook Luther's faith, and spurred him on to unsettle men's minds: and they, instead of reducing the Pope to poverty and evangelic simplicity of life by judicious reform, merely gave an excuse to temporal princes to take the Pope's power into their own hands exclaiming as did the Jews of old, "Away with him! Away with this foreign pontiff. Let us have no mediator between ourselves and Christ!" And the princes, marvelling no doubt at the people's folly, did greatly rejoice thereat, and each became his own Pope from that time forth.

All men can understand that Christ might have appointed a perpetual teacher for all time to govern His Church upon earth, and also that, if He had so done, His doctrine as represented by His Apostles in the Gospel should be the sole guide of faith to men on earth. The question stands: (1) Did He create any Church at all? and (2) Did He really appoint any ruler on earth? The chief difference of opinion consisted in whether or not it is possible for each man by himself to understand the teaching of Christ as set down by the Apostles and the doctors who succeeded them, or whether that task should be reserved for the teaching body of the Church alone. In other words, the Reformation hinged mainly on "Authority or no Authority!" Those who took the former view stood fast by the Old Church, those who took the latter view protested, or declared themselves against, this wholesale monopoly. But surely there is no room

between the two. Clubs there may be, meeting-houses there may well be; for has not Christ Himself said, "That when two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in their midst"? but fatuous as is the notion of a Josiah Muggleton or Joanna Southcote inducing people to follow their particular method of prayer and exercises, and thereafter continue for evermore to propagate such methods and build chapels for the same form of worship, crowning the whole work by giving them the name of their leader—that these should be called a Church, and openly declared and registered as such, rather than a refuge for idiots or a lunatic asylum, is one of the marvels of Anglo-Saxon civilisation, that petrifies the observant foreigner when he visits our island shores.

But this is nothing to what follows, either in its absurdity, iniquity and contempt of justice, or in the enormous consequences involved. There is probably nothing more sacred in legality, reason, or tradition, than the prescriptive right of the Ancient Church of England to possess the lands, churches, glebes and tithes which were solemnly presented to her by pious benefactors during the ages that elapsed between the coming of Saint Augustus and the Reformation. They had the express sanction of the law; they were not only included in the Great Charter of our liberties, but expressly recited over and over again when every succeeding sovereign upon his accession was civilly compelled to re-certify and take oath to the fulfilment of its covenants: and yet the State, in the 16th century, deliberately rejected the faith and communion of Christendom, and altered the fundamental worship of the old religion by the public abolition of the "Mass" or Central Sacrifice, and the equally public deposition of the Pope in favour of their own sovereign.

If we English shine conspicuously by our blunders and stupidity in the pure domains of reason and logic, or what may be termed the luxuries or non-essentials of civil life, what language must we apply to the iniquity and injustice of our religious polity, by virtue of which the Elizabethan Church of England has consistently robbed, and does still rob, under the fullest state sanction, both Dissenters and Catholics of their share of the National Church wealth bequeathed by their pious forefathers for the maintenance of Religion. Nothing can be



more certain in the entire domain of truth and justice than that church rates, tithes and all other ecclesiastical obligations are distinctly reciprocal in their nature, that is, that in consideration of a tenth of the produce of their crops and flocks being set apart for the support of their pastors, the tithe-payers had a distinct right to the fullest benefits of the ministry of the payees or priests.

I need not remind my hearers that formerly the Lords of Manors (once coterminous with Parishes) either themselves built churches and endowed them with a portion of land called a glebe, which, with the tenth of all produce arising from crops and breeding flocks of all kinds, sufficed for the support of the priest of the parish—the lord and his descendants having, by virtue of such donation, the Patronage, i.e. the right of presenting thereto any incumbent who is not under ecclesiastical censure.

As soon as Elizabeth had been safely seated on the throne of her ancestors, her first act was to reinstate the reformed religion by proscribing or deposing the bishops and priests of the old religion, and introducing others in their room, compelling the entire people to adopt the Prayer Book and formularies imposed by Edward VI. and Protector Somerset, and thus transferring bodily the churches, ministers, cathedrals, glebes and tithes to the ministers of her new State-made Church. It has been estimated by trustworthy testimony that up to the end of her reign nine out of ten Englishmen adhered to the Old Church in sympathy, and, as far as was possible, in secret practice. At any rate nothing is more certain than that this violent upheaval was by no means carried out with the unanimous consent of the nation.

Now, whatever views may be held as to the legality or otherwise of Queen Elizabeth compelling all Englishmen to worship God in the manner she dictated, it must be admitted that a very considerable number of Englishmen were, as a matter of fact, driven, from policy or other reasons, into accepting the reformed faith, and that many more, who had secretly clung to the old religion through the stormy and dangerous days of the Virgin Queen—abandoning all hopes of protection in the following century at the hands of the wily son of Queen Mary of Scotland—conformed in large numbers during this and the following

reign, with the natural result that the National churches, if they had been allowed to remain in the hands of those for whose worship and religion they had been intended, would have stood empty and tenantless.

Was it then unreasonable, abstract justice and donors' intentions apart, that the English Government should have taken away the cathedrals and parish churches—their lawful possessions—from the dwindling minority and transferred them to the more numerous adherents of the State faith who had exchanged the Mass for the Prayer Book? I am fully aware, of course, that the spoliation was unjust and sacrilegious in law and fact, and that the bishops and priests of the Old Church in communion with Rome had not only enjoyed from time immemorial the ownership and use of such buildings, but were secured in their possessions by Magna Charta and the highest sanctions of the law of England. Nevertheless, to adhere too closely to the strict equity of the case, might clearly, in the event of the entire nation being forced to adopt the new doctrines—leave the bulk of Church wealth and buildings empty and desolate—which would be ridiculous! Besides, regarding the same as National Church wealth, and as such, belonging to the entire nation, it seems but common sense and “rough and ready” justice (legal sanction and Canon law apart), that such Church wealth should be divided *pro ratâ* among the people, as is the practice of our Teutonic congeners abroad. But to confirm the entire Church lands and possessions of the nation to a body which was, as best, only an unwilling half, and which, not until George III. had come upon the throne, had grown to be two-thirds or more of the nation, dwindling down later through the spread of dissent to probably less than one-half, is an act of legal robbery, for which no excuse or parallel can be found, and one which only a stupid people would tolerate.

In order to appreciate the full force of this injustice one must go to the Northern or South-Western counties, where the parishes, when first formed, being thinly peopled, were naturally carved out of a larger area. In many cases, as for example, in South West Lancashire where large tracts of land in the days preceding the discovery of coal and the invention of cotton mills were thinly inhabited, there are parishes which now possess,

from the large increase of population, an income almost equalling that of a modern bishopric.

In one conspicuous case where the income of the rectorate of Winwick amounted to five thousand a year, at the request of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the then Rector of the parish generously ceded a portion and allowed it to be divided into two or more parishes.

The parishes of Halsall and Sefton (which run Winwick very close in this respect) afford a striking instance of the injustice that is done to Dissenters and Catholics by the absorption of the tithes into the maw of a dwindling State Church, which at present does not probably contain one-half of the population of the realm. Here we have an instance of two rectories, who, in the first place from the great increase of population and value in land (at the time of the Tithe Commutation in 1835), swelled up out of all proportion to the reasonable stipend of a parish priest; in the second place from the fact that a large portion of the tithe-payers and the surrounding tenantry have never seceded to the Anglican Church, the resulting injustice and anomaly has increased two-fold; for their labour and ministerial work being naturally confined to their own flock and their remuneration in land and tithe being in proportion to the whole area of the parish, their duties are not only limited to a small congregation, while the expenses of curates to serve out-lying chapels are saved, but they receive an exaggerated income, without any corresponding obligations, from a large body of tithe-payers, who, while they are legally compelled to pay tithe for an alien religion whose ministrations they reject, have to tax themselves besides to support their own ministers and schools.

Now let us consider for a moment how it works as against the owner of large estates, of whom there are so many in England whose descendants have never changed their faith and have in all probability either built in part or wholly the parish churches upon their land. Here you have the terms of highest injustice pushed to their further logical conclusion; since the descendant of the original Lord of the Manor and builder of the parish church is debarred by the State change of religion in Elizabeth's reign through no default of his own from the use of the parish church which his ancestors had built

for the worship of the ancient faith and no other. Secondly, he is deprived of the ministration of the parish priest, while he is legally compelled to contribute to the parson's superfluity, and to forego a portion of his rental without any corresponding return. Thirdly, he is morally bound to provide a chaplain for his household and his tenantry who are practically evicted from their own parish church by the unjust operations of the law !

It must be remembered that church rates were up to the middle of last century similarly extorted even in Catholic Ireland, where in most parishes the only people who attended the ministrations of the intruding Protestant incumbent were the members of his own household. There the Catholic tenantry were not only compelled by law to pay tithes to the parson, but were compelled by law to pay church rates for the repairs and upkeep of his church and parsonage. This Compulsory Church rate, however, caused so much rioting and so frequently called for military assistance that it was finally abolished about the middle of the last century not so much from any views of inherent justice, as on account of the enormous expense attending its exaction !

When intelligent foreigners upon visiting Ireland have sought an explanation for these astounding public acts of injustice and have reported these circumstances to their incredulous friends at home, even though they have imbibed from their infancy the most atrocious stories of English rule in Ireland, they seem utterly incapable of believing that a principle so entirely conflicting with the fundamental principles of justice should be tolerated in a land which publicly boasts of its wide Toleration and Liberty !

It is not so much however, here, my aim to dwell upon the cruel wrongs of the Reformation—for injustice and cruelty serve often to purify a nation through the fire of suffering—but rather to point out the indirect results of this frightful plunge into the unknown at the bidding of a reckless and petulant tyrant.

It has little by little made Englishmen what they are to-day—frivolous, thoughtless and insincere—and set us on a different plane from any other Christian nation. Small wonder if they fail to understand us !

Worse than that, it has deeply scarred our national Conscience

and poisoned the wells of national truth, so that from a nation of warrior freemen we have sunk—since the days of Agincourt—to be a nation of shopkeepers—aye and far worse than that—a nation of hypocrites—or unbelievers !

How should it be otherwise ? The first lesson learnt by nearly every English child in his Catechism is “ that in baptism he has become a child of God, and an heir to the kingdom of heaven ” ; while in all probability he will hear the vicar in the parish church deny baptismal regeneration, and lament the decay of sound Protestantism, and of the principles of the glorious Reformation. At Sunday-school he will perhaps be enjoined by his teacher to never forget that he is a little Catholic, and that his Apostles' Creed requires him to believe in the Catholic Church, and on the following Monday he gathers from his history lesson that up to the Reformation England was peopled with bad men called Catholics, who were gradually replaced by virtuous Protestants through the forcible measures of Good Queen Bess.

At Oxford he finds pandemonium complete. The Government preacher, Father Ananias Brown, vows that there was no change at all at the Reformation—enjoins auricular confession—and mimicks the mass in white petticoat and crimson vestment—whilst the Rev. Ebenezer Snooks thunders from the parish pulpit against transubstantiation and prayers for the dead—and likens Ritualists to ravening wolves.

Is it then surprising that our youth start life without Faith or Sincerity or Honesty ? If destined for the Church—and unwilling to denounce and expose, or abandon the Church of their parents—they remain conscious hypocrites to the end, content to drown the voice of conscience in the enjoyment of social wealth and station, or in the soberer resources of philanthropy or charity, sinking daily deeper into the slough of imposture, till at last, lost to all shame, they begin to take a pride in tarring others with the same brush, and end by dragging down the new generation to their own level. In this way our gigantic national bubble, however often pricked and burst, is as often reinflated. Like a vast toadstool or a giant banyan it excludes the light in this England of ours, while it absorbs all its wealth, charity and energy. Our State-made religion on the other hand—by setting logic, order and reason at defiance, confuses the intellect, and saps the

morality of English men and women at the most susceptible age. Perpetuated solely by the criminal conspiracy of those who enjoy its emoluments, and who must needs pile lie upon lie to defend their unjust privileges, employing every sordid plea to fend off retribution that the most debased mind can invent or conceive, what must be the effect of so degrading an example upon a religious people, if not to convert them from a Christian nation into a nation of hypocrites or scoffers ?

## CHAPTER V

### CANT OR RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

No true picture can be drawn of the religious, moral and social aspects of British life without a consideration of Cant, its origin, its rise, and its triumphant progress up to the present hour.

Possibly in the majority of cases in which the word Religion is used, Cant would be the truer and more correct expression. It pervades every department of public and private life. It corrodes our civil and religious policy; and, wherever the banner of Religion is raised in Great Britain or indeed in the United States by its self-chosen champions, in nine cases out of ten it is Cant not Religion which should be inscribed in its stead.

Now what is Cant? and what its origin?

It is derived from the French word "Chant," whence, too, "chantage" (or blackmail) or as applied to the lies of horse-dealers in inducing purchasers to buy, hence our chanters; and secondly, to the whining patter of beggars, closely akin to the former in form and matter. It was not applied until two centuries later in its metaphorical sense to the saints of the seventeenth century. The wits of the Cavalier Party first seem to have applied the term to the whining affected speech of the psalm-singing Puritans, whose reckless application of Biblical texts to sanctify their own unworthy actions have afflicted us with that deadly inheritance of Hypocrisy which is usually denominated Cant.

A protracted study of the causes and early phases of the Reformation, revealing as they do an element in the national character of which I can find no traces before that eventful period, has led me to ascribe the origin of Cant or that condition of national mind which is and has been since the seventeenth century so designated, to the necessities of the occasion.

For the first time the Bible, which had been in a great measure a sacred depository of which the priesthood of the Catholic Church were not only the guardians but the authoritative expounders, became the source in which every adversary

of the Ancient Church sought weapons to destroy her. No longer were the Holy Scriptures searched in a reverent spirit, for mutual improvement, edification, and enlightenment, but as an armoury of incalculable value, from which were selected the poisoned arguments that were destined, like the daughters of Chronos, to devour the author of their existence.

Cant, a vulgar word in truth raked from the gutter and worthy of the subject to which it was destined to be applied, taints our national mind and reacts upon every fibre of our body politic. Its results upon the national character are incalculable. When we compare together the central types of pre- and post-Reformation Englishmen, it is terrible to think what a distance has been traversed from Bede to Cranmer, from Sir Thomas More to Lord Halsbury, from Edward III. to Charles II., from Becket to Benson.

When King Harry sent his victims to the gallows because they displeased him and interfered with his views, he was at any rate a Man who lived and died like a man. A brutal tyrant it is true, but still a grand type of the overbearing, roystering, sport-loving, straightforward, masterful Englishman, who asked neither favour from friend or foe, and scorned to assume a virtue if he had it not. But then came to tempt him the serpent Cranmer, chief architect of the English Reformation and Apostle of Cant, who whispered in his ear and taught him to dissemble. "Say you covet not a young wife for an old—forsooth—nor the broad lands of the monks. You only desire their better reformation!"

The Reformation has come and gone. Twice beaten back, by the end of the sixteenth century it was firmly settled at last on Englishmen's backs. That they were the better for it in many ways cannot be doubted, but at what a price !

From this to the triumph of Cant over Truth upon the national stage was but a step. There was a sneaking feeling in most men's minds that they had taken a wrong turn, that they had made a false move. With others there was a conviction that absolute truth was no more with the death and downfall of the old Church. Whatever the rank and file felt and knew, every single actor in the great drama of national robbery felt and knew that he was a rogue and hypocrite when he defended the eviction of the abbots and monks on the grounds that they



were immoral or lazy. They well knew, whatever the preamble might say in palliation of the act, that the real motive was Rapacity, and Rapacity only. So when monks and nuns were turned adrift to starve, how could it be expected that they should bring themselves to tell the plain truth and say, "We want their monasteries and their broad lands"? Thus was universal Cant nationally established. Again, when the ruthless ministers of Elizabeth, fearing the still active partisanship of Mary Queen of Scots or Philip of Spain, sent Catholics to the block or Jesuits to be quartered, could they be expected to face the truth and tell the people that they did so because they had adhered to the Ancient Faith? Certainly not. They declared them to be spies and favourers of Philip, or later of Mary Queen of Scots, and when that would no longer hold water, they were bluntly declared to be "executed as traitors to the realm," instead of as adherents to the ancient religion of the realm, which all Englishmen well knew to be their only crime.

This it was that tainted the national honour. This it was that "sicklied o'er" the national escutcheon with the pale cast of insincerity.

As sin stains the human soul, so a crime consented in by the whole nation leaves an undying mark upon the national character. "From that time," to paraphrase the words Shakespeare so beautifully uses in *Macbeth*, "Truth is no more." Henry, Cranmer, Somerset, Elizabeth, Cecil, and Walsingham have murdered Truth; and Cant henceforth reigns in its stead.

Nor is it only in the sphere of politics that Cant holds sway. In philanthropy, in social schemes, in every branch of morals the trail of the serpent "Cant" is over them all. This it is that has gained for us the name of "Perfide Albion" with our neighbours across the Channel. And right well, at least in foreign politics, have we earned the appellation.

For example, if we consider Gibraltar a useful coaling station we must forsooth declare that we should only be too glad to be able to return it to the lawful owners from whom it was unexpectedly filched, if it were not, for the Spaniards' own sakes, far better to retain this focus of British civilisation in their midst.

If we find valuable gold mines owned by niggers, we take the first futile excuse to seize them and say that we do so for the sole advantage of the people evicted, who, though they lose their gold mine, will infallibly reap in exchange the more durable benefits of British commerce and evangelisation.

If we steal an island from a weak nation like Spain or Portugal, it will be observed that our excuse is never because they are unable to defend themselves, which would be the true one, but that by so doing we save the inhabitants from "priestcraft or idolatry," etc., etc.

So saturated is the British mind with Cant, so sodden is the Press of the country with what may be called our National Substitute for Truth, that it may be fairly said that the language of everyday life has gradually drifted away from that of public and political life; and that orators and leader-writers unconsciously assume a totally different tone as soon as they mount the pulpit or the platform. In short, British public opinion, corrupted by long severance from Truth, requires that a veil of falsehood shall be thrown over the language of her politicians, lest the delicate susceptibilities of the nation be aroused.

For John Bull is always used by the Press and the Politicians to conceal, and be the accomplice of its rogueries, under the guise of a timid maiden. She must never be told the truth, whatever iniquity be done in her name, and above all no breath of public scandal must reach her ears, lest her modesty should be offended.

In seeking the origin of this remarkable phenomenon let us for a moment consider whether this does not clash with the character of truthfulness, with which we invariably credit ourselves, and for which we are pleased to think we have gathered national renown. Surely to speak the truth is our national virtue! Can it be said that lying is our national vice? Let us consider what warrant there is for this stout belief in our national love of Truth. Does it not descend to us from the days of chivalry, and have we not carried it forward, so to speak, as one of our most valuable assets?

It must be admitted that foreigners have a high opinion of English veracity, from which it is clear that at some time or

other Englishmen were celebrated at least for honest commercial dealing, and that when they said their goods were of a particular class, and free from particular defects, it is probable that foreigners generally trusted and believed them, and that hence arose the old phrase that "An Englishman's word was as good as his bond."

In remote parts of the world this flattering axiom is still quoted, but in civilised lands rarely; from which it may be fairly concluded that our reputation in this direction is waning fast. Be this as it may, the conspicuous dishonesty of our Birmingham and Manchester manufacturers has gone far to disable our commerce on the Pacific coast of America, as well as in the China seas, and has too often given a text to commercial reformers, and reporting consuls, to require more than a passing mention.

It is certain that no nation impresses the importance of Truth upon their sons more earnestly than Englishmen. No virtue amongst us is ranked higher than Truth; and no insult is more hotly resented than the imputation of mendacity. This much must be admitted, but does it follow from this that we are more truthful than our continental neighbours? or are we only truthful in our dealings with them, and not among ourselves?

My experience is, that among Western nations truthfulness differs not according to nation so much as temperament, with this exception, that as regards the play of the imagination or what may be called the non-essentials of truth, it may be fairly admitted that the perfervid Celt and the excitable Gascon (whose eloquence often outruns their discretion) and from among our own blood, Australians and New Zealanders, being greatly addicted to self-gratulation and "brag," run even our American cousins themselves a very close race in their respective powers of imaginative invention.

Since the days of Cicero it has been noticed that human nature is especially liable to credit itself with those virtues which it does not possess. This will be found to be a weakness of almost universal application. What woman is there on earth whose conduct is obviously frivolous and constantly requires explanation, who does not expressly pride herself on being "so

very particular," seizing every occasion to denounce frivolity and to visit with righteous indignation the faults of her erring sisters?

The swindling solicitor who spends his life in decoying foolish spiders into his den in order to lighten them of their cash invariably delivers himself of the noblest and highest sentiments, and, if possible, drags in a Biblical text in confirmation of the same.

Again, what is more notorious than the church-going propensities of all the celebrated swindlers who have made a name for themselves in the annals of Newgate and Westminster Hall? Are they not invariably godly men and remarkable for their forwardness in Church matters? Indeed, in Anglo-Saxondom no safer rule can be given to the unwary to prevent being trapped by the guiles of unscrupulous rogues than to shun all dealings with the man who draws special attention to his honesty. "I, sir, am a man that you can rely on, whose word is his bond, and would not cheat a fellow-Christian of the value of sixpence to win an Empire." That is the man to beware of.

One of the most noted Churchmen of the age in a burst of colloquial confidence once said in my presence, "For my part I am not so sure that Englishmen do love truth, at any rate collectively. I greatly doubt if they would have listened to the Sermon on the Mount with anything approaching to respect. The well-dressed would have undoubtedly turned away and said, 'This seems just such another mob meeting as we have in Hyde Park!'" The tables brought down from Mount Sinai, I imagine, would not have fared any better unless Moses had places to give away, and an influential backing.

It is at least doubtful if the Briton of to-day does really care for Truth. He certainly likes what he calls a good working theory, which, by the way, he does not take seriously, but which he can talk and fight over. But he likes a good lie best of all; something new and startling. Mind you, it must have a respectable following; no rag and tag, but men of substance. Or let a man but be notorious for anything, and John Bull will swallow whatever he says, truth or untruth, with equal avidity.

If the angel Gabriel were to come here before us in the dress

of a tramp and tell us he had a message to deliver, though his word were of the purest truth and reason, which of us would care to listen ?

Nor can it be denied that we English, like most stupid people, are greatly addicted to mistaking the spirit for the letter. This is carried to such an extent in our common law, that it may be said as a rule that our common law judges have no choice but to deliver their judgment upon the Letter rather than the Spirit of the contract or other civil transaction in dispute. The result is that the unsuccessful suitor to whom justice has been conspicuously denied, has no other resource but to appeal to Chancery to get the question reversed upon the grounds of common sense and reason, by which process expenses are doubled, a totally different set of lawyers are employed, two judges get a living instead of one, and everybody is pleased, except the unhappy suitor who has probably spent on his victory more than the value of the suit. How can this fail to react sensibly upon the conscience of the nation ?

No nation in the world, individually or collectively, places so high a value as ourselves upon verbal accuracy, which is the letter of truth. Are we equally blameless in respect of that sincerity which is the spirit of Truth ? For this is the cardinal point on which all morality hinges. If we are no longer a sincere people ; if, as we shall see further on, there is strong ground for believing that our love of truth is but an empty show ; and if our insincerity of thought, word and action is painfully noticeable at home and abroad—shall it not be attributed to that fatal inheritance of Cant which has gone farther to taint English blood, corrupt English character, and ruin us in the eyes of the foreigner, than any catastrophe since the Flood ?

## CHAPTER VI

### BIBLE OR BEER

At first sight my heading would seem not far short of incongruous ; those, however, who are acquainted with the inner and more active life of the church will have observed that there is some subtle connection between these two ideas besides the fact of each beginning with a B. The religious Briton, more especially if he is a "seasoned Vessel of Election," turns to Bible or Beer as the magnet to the Pole ; and strange to relate, in common with preachers and doctors, the more he doses others the more firmly he abstains himself from the applications which he earnestly enjoins upon the rest of the world. Being entirely free from blame himself, and having "got Jesus," or "found salvation," or otherwise "made his soul," nothing can exceed his contempt for other people's religious condition unless it is his satisfaction and self-gratulation at having saved his own.

These are the gentlemen who, so to speak, fling the Bible at others whether they will or not, and by cramming it down other men's throats bring the Word of God into disrepute. Equally certain is it that if they do not devote their energies to pelting inoffensive foreigners with Bibles, they needs must devote their superfluous energy to depriving poor men of their Beer. Hence the connection between Bible and Beer, which may be termed the two strings to the bow of the Elect.

Now, strange as it may appear, the gyrations of the religious Briton in the face of Bible or Beer afford more laughter and scorn to the benighted foreigner than perhaps any other manifestation of what (doubtless through ignorance) he persistently regards as British hypocrisy. He scarcely knows which is funnier, that we English should pervade the entire globe with drummers in the religious line who peddle their wares from door to door precisely as commercial travellers do, getting a commission on the Bibles they sell from the house which despatches them, running down rival firms, and vowing that no Bible is genuine unless it bears their trade-mark—all forms of religion being of

course spurious except the one they "travel in"—or that we should invoke the Law to prevent men from buying the beer and spirits out of which half our revenue is earned, and without which our Government could not for a moment subsist!

Besides Hypocrisy, there must be an infinite lack of Humour in the religious Briton to fully account for his singular manœuvres in the matter of Bible or Beer. It is noticeable that when he is deeply affected in that direction, he does not fly to a distant land, nor even sell his goods and give them to the poor, nor demean himself in any biblical or godly fashion. He is generally a singularly comfortable, self-contained citizen who has made his money, and enjoys the respect and esteem of his trade, his church and his native town. Many there are, indeed, who consider the mission fund of the district as a kind of free advertisement by which they herald to the public at large, and their competitors in trade in particular, the tale of their successful profits or stave off rumours of bankruptcy by their exceptional liberality. Others, animated no doubt by the best intentions, being childless, and without near relatives, centre their entire interests in feeding and clothing the heathen, and above all providing him with biblical nourishment, or alternatively, in depriving their fellow-citizens of bibulous refreshment, by every art that their purse or ingenuity can devise. A publican harassed and dislodged is to such men a brand plucked from the burning. Yet, strange to say, these apostles of hypocrisy here in England are neither confined as lunatics, nor is their sanity so much as disputed.

Possibly the explanation is to be found in the statement of the Danish Prince that such trifles are not noticed in England, "*as they are all mad there.*" Anyhow, instead of being set down as people possessed by an engrossing if objectionable "craze," they pose as would-be saviours of society, and, stranger still, not unfrequently draw in their wake others more foolish than themselves, who, like Johanna Southcote and other half-witted fanatics of immortal memory, frequently obtain, instead of pity or aversion, a large meed of general approbation. Is there a country town in all England where a certain number of old women of both sexes do not acquire a certain notoriety, and, what is more, a reputation for

philanthropy, by dunning all their friends for contributions and deluding the small fry of their acquaintance into surrendering their hard-won sixpences in order to swell the mission box of some society or other of which they know or care next to nothing, in order to convert heathens of whom they know less—while at their doors more exemplary forms of perfect heathendom are to be discovered than in any other part of the universe ?

I never see an engaging old lady wheedling the price of a bar of chocolate or a sponge cake from a schoolboy "to save the heathen," without wishing that they could see Sky-Pilot Parade (as the irreverent term a palatial group of missionary residences at Shanghai) in order that they might have some idea of the probable result of their sacrifice and be enabled to inform their co-religionists of the manner in which the lavish contributions of the faithful are applied.

But do we not read in Scriptures, "Go ye and teach all nations," etc., etc. ? Quite so ; but surely that is not the same as asking people to subscribe to a company of exceedingly comfortable citizens who make a living by the contributions of the unsuspecting members of their faith, an extremely small portion whereof is ultimately devoted to Bible distributions after the requirements of the aforesaid gentlemen, an enormous staff, scores of secretaries, and magnificent mansions at home and abroad, have been abundantly satisfied. Moreover, to whom was the command addressed ? Surely to an apostle ! Now if we can judge rightly of Saint Paul's expenses as described by himself in numerous epistles as well as from contemporary reports, they were not likely to constitute a very heavy drain upon his co-religionists !

In the words of the immortal Mrs. Glass of hare-cooking fame it seems reasonable to advise "First catch your apostle." Having then made sure of his qualities, there surely can be no objection to provide him with sufficient funds for the purpose, or at any rate such outfit as will enable him to do his work properly. "This is all very fine," will exclaim the staff of the "Aboriginal Improvement Society" or the "Society for the Dispersion of Useless Knowledge," but where do we come in ? how are we going to be supported ? Charity begins at home !



Do we not, like Saint John the Baptist, make straight the ways for them that dwell in darkness, and further, do we not find apostles for the public, and what is more, frequently rear them up in our missionary schools and other kindred institutions ?

Far be it from me to deny that there is in England much good intention, much pure philanthropy, and a sincere desire to benefit the lot of the heathen by teaching him the rule of Christ and placing the Bible within his reach : but I do most positively aver, in common with nearly all travellers who have become acquainted with the missionary system in its actual operation throughout the globe, that in England and the United States at any rate, the Missionary business is, and has been, conducted from the beginning precisely as any other commercial enterprise ; and to use the expressive language of America, the good intentions and superabundant cash of excellent but misguided people are "run for all they are worth" by designing and interested companies, who, under the never-failing banner of Cant or Religious Hypocrisy, not only empty the pockets of their co-religionists to the uttermost farthing, but cast themselves and their enormous families upon the unwilling though too often unresisting heathen for further support, by a judicious application of diplomacy and gunboat.

Nor as far as common sense and reason can dictate could it possibly be urged that a Divine sentence such as we quoted above, applied to a devoted Apostle of known merit and tried self-sacrifice, can ever be one of universal application, still less be used as the foundation of joint-stock companies paying a handsome dividend.

Perhaps the foremost and most important or central doctrine of Christ is "To love thy neighbour as thyself." Has it ever occurred to the "unco guid" to preface their missionary efforts by a formal inquiry as to how their victims enjoy the process of involuntary conversion ? Or can any honest or reasonable person in this land deny that if this proposition were placed plainly and squarely before any set of savages upon the habitable globe as thus :—"We, the undersigned inhabitants of the great champion land-grabbing nation of the world, propose shortly to invade your shores and present you on behalf of the 'Foreign Missions,' the 'Gospel Brethren,' the 'Free

Kirk,' the 'Presbyterian Missions,' the 'United Wesleyans,' the 'Rechabites,' the 'Moravians,' and some thirty or forty others, with an abundance of cheap tracts and cheap Bibles, every one of which societies offer you the only true way of life, and the only correct form of worship for securing salvation—enjoining you to divide yourself into equal sections, so that we can share your nation easily between us ; in return for which, we ask for nothing more than what you can easily give without depriving yourselves of the absolute necessities of life : we feel, however, called upon to warn you that any difference in opinion that arises between us will be settled in *our* favour at *your own* expense by *our* gunboats"—would not their answer be an indignant negative ?

It follows, therefore, that in its last analysis, such and similar conspicuous examples of British Cant-in-action amount to this, that Great Britain acts towards these defenceless heathens precisely as she, in common with all the other so-called civilised nations, behave in pushing their trade. In a word, because they are weak, she compels them, whether they like it or no, to take her wares, civil, religious, or commercial. This, as I have myself seen in half-a-dozen groups of islands in the Pacific Ocean, is the nefarious custom common to all the European Concert as it is facetiously termed. For, given only the opportunity, the Sky-Pilot, arbitrary by nature and training, shines wherever he can discover a suitable opening, by a tyranny which is scarcely equalled or indeed distinguishable from any vulgar secular despotism.

I have a distinct recollection, when I visited the Friendly Islands, of the manifold acts of tyranny exercised by a minister called Shirley when he succeeded in establishing a highly profitable theocracy, by virtue of which he not only obtained an absolute ascendancy over the King of Tonga whom he had converted to Wesleyanism, but managed to monopolise "Copra," the only trade of the island, besides drawing up a code of law which he enforced with truly Spartan severity. It would take long to recite the wrongs thereby inflicted upon the unhappy islanders, or the list of legally enacted infringements on their natural liberty which produced an abundant and profitable crop of fines, or their equivalent value in work ; let it suffice as an

example, that no islander was allowed to walk on the public highway (under penalty of a dollar fine) without boots—an article about as natural to an amphibious and fishing population in the Tropics as a pair of spectacles to an elephant. Secondly, the entire population were compelled to dress in European shirt and trousers, the women in smock and petticoat, which articles, sold by the said Shirley at a high price—he having the sole monopoly of them in the island—contributed not a little to swell the Wesleyan exchequer. Thirdly, as a crowning absurdity, they were to be forcibly civilised by being compelled to follow European habits at meals, and in all villages a bell was to be rung three times a day, at 8, 12 and 6, at which times the inhabitants were expected to sit down to their respective meals whether they liked it or not. Moreover sanitation (so-called) was thrust upon them by a law which compelled every householder under a penalty of fine and imprisonment to erect elaborate privies after a definite plan, to be built out of Wesleyan imported planks. It is needless to add that their simple rustic habits debarred them from either divining or availing themselves of their proper use. These privies I personally, in numerous cases, ascertained to be exclusively devoted to the secreting of the Bible and Hymn Books (also similarly imported but compulsorily paid for in “Copra”) which, as in many other parts of the world, though seldom, if ever, perused, are regarded with the deepest veneration as an amulet or charm of the highest value, to be applied externally or internally, in suitable doses as occasion requires.

In short, to sum up the entire missionary situation in connection with the biblical command upon which we Christians rely, it seems that there is no warranty whatever for any interference, especially as between the stronger and weaker of nations, with a religion or civilisation which no doubt Providence dispenses in a degree and amount suited to their capacity and temperament. When, however, the call is internal instead of external, and a man like Francis Xavier, or Peter of Alcantara, or Peter Claver, of his own accord, impelled by the spirit of self-abnegation and intense love of humanity, goes forth to preach the word, without money or friends, or help of any kind, trusting solely for his sustenance to the love or esteem that he

inspires amongst his hearers, surely such a one may reasonably be a subject for admiration and respect.

Now, however monstrous in itself, the spectacle of a great and powerful nation in the van of civilisation deliberately fostering at enormous expense the importation of thirty or forty different organisations for introducing compulsory varieties of religion all hostile to each other, and wherever possible forcing the same down the throats of an unwilling but defenceless people as a preliminary to the next step which invariably consists in compulsory exchange and introduction of Manchester calicoes and Birmingham hardware similarly pushed at the point of the bayonet, what should be the reflections of the critical foreigner, or even the impartial Englishman, when he remembers that there is more misery, more hopeless squalor, vice and organised savagery within the sound of Bow Bells than can probably be found in the entire circumference of the Pacific Ocean ? More especially when none but the blindest, the most bigoted, and the most prejudiced can hesitate in ascribing to these same nations (who, according to our scribblers, are "bereaved of the blessings of civilisation, and stumbling in the ways of darkness") any conceivable inferiority to ourselves in point of happiness, morality, or any other essential of human felicity ! Yet so ingrained from our infancy is our instinct to depreciate in others an existence which seems to be incompatible with our own aims and perhaps our own less favoured condition, that you will hear not merely casual globe-trotters, or thoughtless travellers, but men of intelligence and learning, parrot-like deploring the lamentable condition of the Mexicans, or Africans, or South Americans, who—in total oblivion of the natural and supreme object of life (as viewed by the Anglo-Saxon race) of wearing out their lives in the desperate pursuit of dollars—spend their existence in avoiding all exertion beyond what is necessary for a bare living, in the belief that a natural life spent in innocent diversions, tempered with sufficient labour to give it zest, without wants or luxuries but what a beneficent nature bestows freely upon all her sons, confers a degree of happiness, which neither varnished boots nor swallow-tailed coats, nor even chimney-pot hats, suffice entirely to secure.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DRINK QUESTION

OUR attitude towards what is recognised to be an abiding blot on our pretended civilisation and the reputed source of half of our national crime is, if anything, more surprising than our views upon international equity, and exhibits that strange divergence between action and speech, or, in plain words, between what we do and what we say, which is the essential feature of that hypocrisy which earns the disfavour of our Continental critics. While fully sympathising with our desire to diminish a curse which the best authorities assert to be the chief cause of crime among us, nevertheless our method of coping with its evils fills all foreigners and neutral spectators among ourselves with amazement and disgust. For what can be more illogical, or comprise a more complete denial of our boasted principles of liberty than for the possessors of well-stocked cellars and comfortable homesteads to band themselves together for the express purpose of bringing legal compulsion upon their less favoured neighbours, in order to deprive them of those facilities for drink which they themselves possess in the highest degree?

Now let us suppose for a moment that collective humanity is capable of such perfection as to be induced by external pressure to abandon its favourite weakness or, perhaps, to substitute one for another. If we may judge of the future by the experience of the past, substitution is the best we can hope for, since no human record from the earliest time has ever afforded an instance of any human being or group of human beings being flogged into repentance, still less into reformation.

No doubt temporary abatement of this or any other human passion can be occasionally brought about by a wave of religious enthusiasm, such as when Father Matthew preached his gospel of temperance to the Irish, or Savonarola induced the ladies of Florence to pile up their jewels in the market place and exchange their luxurious dresses and ornaments for the simple

attire of the early Christians. Let us not forget the wise old Roman saying, "Expel Nature with a fork, still she persists in returning!"

However, as my present purpose is not to discuss the question of whether or not coercive temperance will finally prevail, as it has already in many States of America without any corresponding moral or material advantage, but rather to point out the divergence between our profession and our practice, it may be sufficient to remark that, sentiment apart, no better reason can be urged for depriving one's neighbour, either by force of arms or police regulations, of his undoubted right to buy and drink as much beer or wine as he thinks fit, than for legally regulating the amount of bread that shall be sold in a given district, how many bakers shall be allotted to a certain area, or how many muffins each household shall consume. For, be it observed, excess in muffins is quite as deleterious, and, to many people, quite as seductive to the palate as beer or wine, especially with members of the fair sex, whose efforts to shorten their lives by the consumption of that and similar tea-adjuncts, though, possibly, not so unpleasant in its results, show a perseverance which is not equalled by the most inveterate drunkard.

While it must be admitted that absolute liberty in a civil state is unattainable, it is surely one of the strangest paradoxes of history that the two nations whose glory it is to place liberty in the forefront of their civil institutions, should in America, through the action of several State legislatures, and in England, through the rapidly increasing body of teetotalo-maniacs, afford the astonishing spectacle to the world, of nations whose most fervent and popular efforts are directed to a crusade against personal freedom.

Before dismissing the subject let us bear in mind that the striking feature of this strange offspring of Stupidity and Cant may be summed up in the determination (in the words of Hudibras) to

"Compound for sins we are inclined to,  
By damning those we have no mind to."

Brave old Butler, how well he knew the nonconformist spirit! What could better illustrate the essential spirit of the religious-political squabbles of the 17th century, culminating in that

magnificent display of dog-in-the-manger intolerance, which induced the Dissenters to reject James II.'s offer of equal rights with the English Church, *if similar rights were extended to the Papists!* And yet these same Puritans, like the Redcaps of the French Revolution, were never tired of prating of Religious and Civil Toleration and Liberty!

Nor let us forget that however permissible, nay, even laudable, it may be for weak-willed individuals to bind themselves of their own accord not to transgress the bounds of moderation by signing or taking the pledge, etc., it is difficult to conceive a more degrading exhibition than to publish the avowal, "*urbi et orbi,*" that Englishmen are unable to control their ignoble passions without the forcible intervention of the law.

It is not easy to persuade our foreign critics of even so much as the honesty of our intentions in that direction. "Is this not," he exclaims, "part of your gigantic scheme of universal hypocrisy to profess to be anxious about the reform of drunkards, when you know full well that the proceeds of drink form the chief support of your administration, and that a diminution in the drink bill would be the ruin of your nation? The next thing we shall hear is that the imposition of a heavy salt tax upon the starving peasantry of India, and the forcible introduction of opium at the bayonet's point upon the Chinese, have no bearing whatever on your financial interests, but are solely and entirely devised for the sanitary and moral improvement of the nations aforesaid!"

Hamlet said of Polonius, "If he *will* play the fool, let him play the fool in his own house." A pity that we do not take the lesson to our hearts. If we have the taint of hypocrisy, let us, at least, avoid parading it to a scoffing world. Let us frankly avow it, and, like a distemper in our body politic, let us never rest until we starve it out by want of nourishment and stamp it out of our hearts and those of our children.

Bible and Beer have, up till lately, been considered the watch-words of English Conservatism. It is surely a strange instance of the irony of events that, owing to the peculiar disposition and working of our system of Party Politics, the Conservative party should have first succeeded in passing a drastic measure upon lines similar to, if not still stricter than, those proposed by the

Radicals when in power on various former occasions. Well might the Brewers exclaim in the celebrated words of Sir Harry Vane, "The Lord preserve me from my friends!"

Here we seem to have reached, in the year of our Lord 1904, the highest development of popular folly, injustice and want of logic, to which the human mind can attain. With the exception of the well-known legislative feat of compelling China to accept a compulsory opium treaty, which was, be it remembered, first solemnly devised by the Houses of Parliament, and then deliberately forced upon the Chinese at the cannon's mouth, no greater outrage has ever been perpetrated against the sanctity of justice and humanity at large, than the conversion by a stroke of the pen of the entire difference between the value of hotels, public-houses and beer-houses, when fully-licensed, compared with what they would be worth without such licenses (or, in other words, the aggregate of their trade "goodwills") into a national asset from the date of the passage of the Licensing Bill of 1904. Nor must it be supposed that this measure, sweeping as it was, was violent enough to suit the extreme temperance party in the land, or even any large section of the Radical party. For the second time at least in modern Conservative history the astute leaders of that body have considered it hopeless to defend to the full the interests of their supporters, and have, consequently preferred to take the matter in hand themselves, and by satisfying their opponents, stave off their tyranny for a while, by passing a more moderate Bill than they could possibly have hoped their opponents, if in power, to pass. In order fully to appreciate the intrinsic injustice of such a measure we must recollect that the licensing or beer and spirit selling trade has been held, both by State and Law, to be a perfectly legitimate branch of commerce. Not only has that Trade acquired the same rights before the law as any other, according to innumerable decisions, but through the action of the Excise the State, besides enriching itself, also carries on the expenses of its Government very largely through the taxes paid upon the manufacture of such articles. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that if all Englishmen became suddenly teetotalers, it would be almost impossible for our Government to maintain itself.



It comes to this, therefore, that by following the practice of the wolf and the lamb of the ancient fable, the State, finding her means of raising income is becoming beautifully less, presents to the world a magnificent exhibition of the purest British Cant by suddenly admitting that she has been enriching herself these 300 years past upon the proceeds of "this vile and infamous traffic," and that, therefore, the only means left to her of purifying the connection and sanctifying her partnership, is to plunder the Liquor Trade still more ruthlessly than before, by laying down the doctrine that the entire increment, or, in other words, the trade goodwill of the entire licensing community, must be instantly confiscated and diverted into the State coffers.

It may be further observed that, precisely as in all other extravagant crusades in which lying and exaggeration take the place of principle and truth, it is a favourite device to act upon the well-known principle of giving a dog a bad name in order to hang him.

Thus the rabid teetotalers and Radical Press generally, on platform or in newspaper, delight in denouncing the liquor trade as a vile Monopoly, and those who take part in it as vampires who suck the blood of the nation.

Now, in the first place, a monopoly is a right accorded by the State to an individual or a company to sell a given article of general use to the exclusion of all others, while the liquor trade being essentially one of the widest competition corresponds as little with a monopoly as anything that can be. If, by a confusion of ideas, the term "monopoly" is applied to the entire licensing trade because individual retailers are compelled to purchase from the State the right of sale, it would be just as rational to call hawkers or cab proprietors or bakehouse keepers "monopolists," since they in common with publicans pay a duty or tax for the right of selling their wares. Moreover, because of late years a group of fanatics, in Parliament and out, have infected the local authorities in many parts of the country so deeply with their own preposterous views that a license has come to be considered a boon rather than a mere commercial transaction, some muddle-headed individuals have come to think that since that boon has been conferred by the State, the State has, after due notice, a right to take away that which it has given. To that the answer is perfectly clear. The State has no right to determine a compact

between itself and an individual where no term is assigned, except where the misconduct of the contracting party constitutes a danger to the nation. Now this risk is averted and fully provided for by the system of endorsing licenses, coupled with the clear conditions upon which licenses have always been granted, and without which it would be most unreasonable to grant them; namely, the good conduct of the license-holder. As in all other contracts between man and man, it is the essence of public polity that good faith must be kept between the contracting parties, without which civilisation would be a fraud and a sham. If, then, ordinary contracts between man and man are and always have been invested with the highest sanction, how much higher must be the sanction of those that are entered into with the full consent of the representatives of a free people in the person of their Government. Yet here we see, as in many other instances, the futility of expecting a stable, consequent, and firm Polity where there exists no Constitution which determines the fundamental and irremovable principles upon which it rests, and above all the fatal evil of our system of party politics, which reckes little of national shame when a party victory may be obtained, and by reason of which a bare vote taken, perhaps, in a thin House, or snatched by a cunning combination of party fanatics, endangers or sweeps away the props upon which our entire polity rests.

An Archbishop of Canterbury has summarised the whole question in an admirable apothegm which cannot too often be repeated: "*I would rather see England free than sober.*"

That these brave and true words have been misconstrued a thousand times, and twisted to vile purposes is only to say that the teetotalomaniac is a poor thing of small wit and less judgment, which "all who run may see" for themselves.

Such sayings were ever "caviare" to the million.

It is Freewill that we must strengthen in Englishmen and women, not the Arm of the Law.

Let us strive to breed men and women, not sponges or limpets, nor even sheep who follow each other in a beaten track without knowing why or whither. Let us bestir ourselves to make self-reliant Christians of our race, not educated beasts—free men and women who can be trusted to choose good from evil—the masters, not the slaves, of their inclinations and passions.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR GLORIOUS CONSTITUTION

PASSING into the political sphere, here again the mote and the beam play a most important part. Just as in the wider area of religious thought, so in the political there is nothing that an Englishman brags of more openly and arrogantly than his ability to shape his own destiny and steer his own course without let or hindrance from any country in the world. He will often boast of his very language as if it were heaven-born and insular as his own views. Even to the present hour when he sees his cherished markets invaded with cheap German substitutes he fills out his chest and with a sneer remarks, "Humph, made in Germany." Here once more we are confronted with the difficulty of deciding if stupidity or blindness or want of thought is most conspicuous. For what is the obvious suggestion that should spring into every cultivated mind at so thoughtless an exhibition of folly or self-deception? When I hear such words as these I tremble to think what the German may say. Might he not answer, "You Britons brag of your race and your doings as if you had dropped from the brain of Jove, like Minerva, all armed. Surely you must know that you are at least as near akin to us as what you call your trans-Atlantic cousins, even if the cousinship be a few generations further back? Your very language is but a dialect of German. Your people are for the most part Germans, and though you cry that you "Never, never, never will be slaves," you were first enslaved by Normans, who did their best to eradicate your German language and de-Teutonize your customs compelling you to use their language for well nigh three centuries, until at last the Teutonic speech got the upper hand of Norman! (And, indeed, are not your laws and customs relics of German habits like ours?) A century later, you go to Germany for your reformed religion, and your new worship, and claim our Luther for your new prophet; while scarcely has your new German religion been crammed down the people's

throats at the sword's point, when your new-taught divines flock to Dordt, as to a new-found Rome, for comfort and consolation, and come back "publicly thanking God that now there is no difference between your religion and ours!" Three generations later, you tire of your home-bred kings because they have thrown off the German brand of religion, and take to your arms the dullest and meanest of our German princelets in his room, with a thin trickle of Stuart blood in his veins! There is probably not an Englishman so true-bred, however English he may think himself, that has not through some of his ancestors as much foreign blood as there is of English blood in the House of Brunswick, and yet your Court is crammed with our refuse or destitute German princelets—for all they are "made in Germany,"—who filch away your best places, military and naval, and regard your land as a happy hunting ground expressly "made for Germany"!

Once more, let me entreat my fellow-countrymen, in the words of Hamlet, "if they will play the fool, to play the fool in their own houses."

To those whom I respect and esteem, that section of the British public which desires "*Esse quam videri*" ("to be, rather than to seem"), I would appeal to leave no stone unturned to pluck the beam from their fellow-countrymen's eyes and guide them to more modest ways—while to the great bulk of my fellow-countrymen who, unless their very speech and acts greatly belie them, reverse that noble axiom and care little or nothing so long as they seem to be what they are not, I entreat them, if they will not or cannot amend their manners, at least to wash their dirty linen at home and not to offer themselves as a spectacle to gods and men.

Nothing would be more entertaining if it were not painful than the amazing illusions respecting the British Constitution and its mysterious accessories. Here, again, I am never quite sure whether it is not part of that enormous conspiracy originating in the determination of the well-informed to hoodwink the less favoured majority of the nation. Yet I for one will never cease to inveigh against the wickedness of teaching our children, and still more the children of the nation as the helpless victims of our School Board system of education may well be called, the

outrageous fictions that we dignify with the name of history. What British child is there who does not learn that Magna Charta is the great bulwark of our liberties? yet what is it but an elaborate and most selfish list of the encroachments of a selfish and rapacious tyrant upon the privileges of an equally rapacious and selfish nobility? In short, a rectification of the barons' wrongs, and an assertion of the paramount rights of the Lords and Superior Clergy without ever a thought for the nation at large! And what else? Why, strange to relate, its most important and prominent clause was carefully constructed by the clergy to make their own rights indefeasible against a grasping and irreligious monarch. In the favourite language of the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, the average schoolboy will be no doubt surprised to hear that Magna Charta is practically swept away, since its first and most important clause defending the interests of the English Church, that is the Church in communion with Rome, was necessarily swept away and cancelled at the Reformation. As to the later provisions, referring as they do mainly to the preservation of the Feudal rights of the fighting aristocracy, scarce a shadow of them remains, nor would they be of any service to the nation if they did.

We are often told in most magniloquent language, which the British schoolboy is expected to re-echo with enthusiasm, that the next great political event which should fill the Briton's breast with pride is our Glorious REVOLUTION. Now this in plain words amounts to a transference by sale of the entire realm of England, and presumably of the unresisting sheep therein contained who "Never, never, never will be slaves," from the rule of the last Catholic Stuart to one of the meanest, coldest and most self-seeking Dutchmen that ever schemed for power or Dutch influence in European Councils, *at our expense!*

The Protestant Settlement which was its legal outcome is usually referred to in Exeter Hall, and Orange Institutions generally, as the glorious Charter of our Protestant Liberties, by which, translated out of British cant into plain English, is meant—at any rate for the sister kingdom—the right for one-tenth of Irishmen and Dissenters not only to enjoy their own religion in an alien land, that is in Protestant Ulster, which

was undoubtedly wrenched from their Irish possessors by fraud and treachery, but also to enjoy the peculiar delight of a free hand to impose their religion upon the remaining nine-tenths and reduce them for 200 years to that position of civil slavery which has caused England to become the scorn and byword of nations. That Orangemen should glory in the Revolution which put them on the back of the Papist majority and use it as a continual blister wherewith to scarify their fellow-subjects can well be imagined, for as Cicero so truly says of men in a phrase that rings through the ages, "Men are never more resentful and vindictive than towards those whom they have wronged," surely an incredible proposition, but one to which all times and all students of humanity have borne abundant witness. England, however, has less excuse than Orange Ireland, whose position as a desperate garrison in an alien land upon stolen territory, earned them the hatred of a spirited people, while England's chief acquisition in the matter was a Dutch king, a large debt incurred in quarrels not our own, and one of the most insulting and abusive Declarations that was ever presented to the sovereign of a free nation to sign, in order to keep out the rightful line and ensure a Protestant succession. This Declaration, which every English monarch is compelled to read on mounting the throne, in itself one of the finest monuments to Cant that ever emanated from a British pen, is not only clung to and fondly maintained by extreme Protestants, through sheer stupidity and blind-adhesion to a Shibboleth of days gone by, but is remarkable for this, that while it substantially adds nothing to the security of our realm from falling into the hands of a Catholic ruler, it is conspicuous for its precise and categorical expression of insolence and distrust towards the sovereign who reads it. If foreigners could furnish no other proof of our national stupidity, surely such a monument as this would alone suffice to gain their cause.

I have before adverted to the fact that there are few subjects of British self-gratulation that are more closely concurred in by our foreign friends than our so-called British Constitution, and I have before pointed out that, in the first place, as a determinate charter it does not, properly speaking, exist; secondly, that it is a kind of mythical bubble of which the less cultivated make use after dinner to glorify their hearers and

themselves and the institutions in which they have a share ; thirdly, it is mainly a collection of old world maxims, many of which have been repealed, till, like the Florentine horse of "Brown, Jones and Robinson"—"the head and legs and most of the body have been restored, but the rest belongs to the original animal," and finally, that its wide-reputed qualities are almost exclusively due to our Saxon stolidity, which acts precisely like the central weight in the political see-saw, and which, being exceedingly hard to move in one direction or the other, allows both parties alternately to kick the beam, and each in turn to press their views upon the country. For whenever a so-called Constitutional measure is threatened through the passions of extremists on either side, John Bull comes to the rescue with the weight of his bovine, if stupid, indifference to improvement and reluctance to change, and acts like oil upon the troubled waters in calming the political sea by preventing a reform or revolution which he neither wants nor understands. So little is our Constitution a fixed quantity, or in any way definable, or similar to any other upon the earth or under the earth, that there are not a few among our most distinguished men who, while not hesitating to extol the legendary beauties of the British Constitution to their delighted electors, do not scruple to dilate among their cultivated equals upon the elasticity which characterizes our Constitution and which makes all things possible to all men ; while others openly and loudly glorify our proud position of having no Constitution at all, and do not hesitate to declare their conviction that whatever meed of political prosperity has fallen to our lot is mainly attributable to our dearth of a Constitution.

Here again the foreigner who learns the true state of things is filled with amazement at our recklessness when he discovers that this grand Constitution of which we boast so much, and to which in his childhood he fondly attributed the stability of our civil institutions, so far from possessing a firm basis, affords no such check or warranty soever against popular passion or popular change as are considered essential to the constitutions of every people in civilized Europe. Our centre of power for two centuries has wandered to and fro, formerly in the feudality and King, next in the military, now in the civil, next in

the landlords, and next in King and Parliament, and last of all, at the present hour, is the subject of continual dispute between Parliament as a body, and the particular members which call themselves a Cabinet chosen out of its ranks, while any irresponsible private member who thinks he can find a backing may, without let or hindrance, propose the abolition, nay, and carry it too, of the most cherished and sacred of our national institutions.

Are we not, then, a stupid people? since practically we trust to luck or to the aforementioned invaluable deadweight of British stolidity as our only guarantee against anarchy and disruption? or rather, is not this recklessness and rashness becoming fast a permanent national trait? Is it not the same spirit that prompts us yearly to rush into wars with Abyssinia, and the Transvaal, and Thibet, and Ashantee, and any other second-class nation which we think we can easily beat, with an open purse and a light heart, trusting to luck alone, and when rebuffed we console ourselves by telling each other in the immortal words of Mr. Balfour, "We always have blundered in the past, and for all he could see we always should in the future."



## CHAPTER IX

### PARTY POLITICS

IF, then, our much-lauded Magna Charta and our fabulous British Constitution turn out upon examination to be nothing more than exploded bubbles to which silly people have, through the cunning of their teachers, learnt to ascribe a fetish-like importance; if moreover, on closer scrutiny, we find that our glorious Constitution (so-called) is of so frail a texture and so ill-designed that we possess no kind of effectual check such as all civilised nations have deemed it necessary to protect their most valued rights from being suddenly swept away by the passing gusts of popular passion—what have we to say to the system which we term Party Government? which resolved into its simpler elements may be described as an artificial division of the British race into two religions, whose God is Power, whose hierarchy is the Ministry, and, in a general way, whose ultimate aspirations are centred in “Large profits and quick returns.”

Now as our race is eminently Conservative, this arbitrary and senseless disposition of things, having accidentally originated with the deep fissure that split the nation into Whigs and Tories upon the question of a Stuart or a Dutchman for a king, has been retained, like most English institutions, till it has come (just as Free Trade became in a later century) to be regarded as a branch of the national religion to be followed without question, however senseless and inapplicable to present needs.

Probably there is no more deeply-rooted weakness in the human mind than respect for antiquity. The silliest fables that ever emanated from the brain of man need but to be softened by the mists of antiquity in order to be swallowed wholesale. Even the Semitic races, perhaps the least credulous and the keenest witted of all the children of men, as well as the Hindoos, and ancient Greeks and Romans, found no difficulty in gaining acceptance for the senseless fables that we find woven into the fabric of their religions.

Is it, then, to be wondered at that a dull-witted race like ours

should equally be prone to sanctify each and every practice which claims antiquity for its sponsor, and hypocritically take pride in it—a mere rut into which we have stumbled because we are too stupid to get out of it?

I am fully aware that some of our greatest men have warmly advocated the system of Party, not only on the ground of its suitability to our national character, but also by attempting to prove its universal efficacy. As to the former argument, we have only to observe the habits of the domestic ass to convince ourselves of the tenacity of our humbler brethren to the path in which they are accustomed to tread in order to refrain from branding with the name of laziness or stupidity what may easily, by the aid of oratory, be raised to the rank of a virtue.

When, however, efficacy becomes the plea for marching in a traditional groove, this is but a resort to the well-known demagogic practices that have come down to us from the days of Demosthenes, and is usually dignified, in these days, by the term of “playing to the gallery.”

It is not improbable that if the four-footed companion of Balaam were called upon to explain the cause of his deep-rooted antipathy to depart from his usual route, his answer would be cast in a similar mould; and here we arrive by easy stages at a condition of mind which is so deeply connected with the most obvious manifestations of British genius, that we are almost tempted to regard it as the “Open Sesame” to its most hidden secrets.

“What is, is good.” “What I and my father and my grandfather and his fathers before him have done, *must* be good. Therefore it follows that everything that has been done for a long time must also be good, or else, where should we be now? If it was bad, we should have perished long ago, therefore it must be good, and I shall keep on doing it as long as I live. What is good enough for my fathers is good enough for me.” Some such logic as this, which has often been ascribed to Hodge by his detractors, even if couched in higher and more flowery language, constitutes the staple judgment of the average Briton upon average subjects.

Depend upon it, it is not our Constitution, nor our Magna Charta, nor our Declaration of Rights, that has saved us in

the past, and will save us in the future. It is the cautious, unenterprising disposition of the British elector, which, like lead on the keel, often steadies the ship of State however buffeted by wind or wave.

For let us consider what this artificial division of British humanity into Whig and Tory really means. It means that each reasonable man attaining the age at which the law enables him to bear a share in the nation's destiny, is either fettered in advance by the prejudices or exaggerated statements of those by whom he has been nurtured, or the family practices in which he has been bred. Instead of applying the knowledge which he has gained (if any), and the reason with which he is endowed, to defeat the abuses, remove the corruptions, and help to guide the bark of State, or lift those about him from the grooves in which dull habits have retained them—he is practically thrown into the conflict, bound hand and foot by the senseless convictions, prejudices, passions and follies of what he is taught to call his "Side." From early infancy it has been assumed that he is a Whig or Tory, Liberal or Conservative, according to family tradition and connection, without a chance of hearing an impartial or unbiassed statement of the political facts which he is called upon to face. Is it wonderful, then, that having heard no good of one side and every known virtue ascribed to the other, he should select, before his mind is formed, or opinions and judgment strengthened by experience, so close an attachment to one or other parties of the State as to be prematurely bound like Ixion to the wheel, and thus fatally incapacitated from the obvious work to which every patriotic citizen should devote himself, namely, the improvement of the lot of his fellow-countrymen, and the elevation of his own nation by the elevation of every man within it? For is it not manifest that no man can think the same thoughts, trim his mind to the same view, or hold the same opinion upon the multifarious points which go to make the politics of a Party? Surely only the stupidest of a stupid nation could hope to evolve permanent conditions of national life out of circumstances so entirely opposed to human reason and experience. And what are the results directly traceable to this unhappy system? Simply

this, that without any fixed intention on their part, unless as regards some few ultra-demagogues of the Republican type whose sympathies are more foreign than British, the entire people of England put in practice the familiar methods of commerce to which their instinct naturally leads them, and from the very nature of things the vital interests of the nation are systematically bought and sold in the market-place or tossed to and fro in the senseless hurly-burly of party politics.

Setting aside the magnificent philanthropic conquests of Lord Shaftesbury in the sphere of child labour, of Wilberforce on behalf of our colonial slaves, and at an earlier date still of John Howard and Mrs. Fry, who so nobly spent their lives in alleviating the lot of the miserable denizens of our gaols and workhouses, the history of the nineteenth century is the helpless fall of a helpless people from an ultra-aristocracy to the most helpless, aimless, soulless democracy that the world ever saw. The key-note of the downward slide is the alternative Political Auction of Whigs and Tories, resulting in placing the national destiny in the hands of the working classes, and handing over its most important interest, agriculture, to the wolves. Had it been the definite purpose of the majority of English electors to put up power to auction until there was nothing left to bid for, and no prize left to be bandied to and fro, it might at any rate be urged that the stronger had prevailed, and that according to the modern theory elaborated under Mr. Gladstone's many governments, and brought to a head by the successful Liberals of the nineteenth century, their Pope Majority had spoken—"Causa finita est." Not so! It was simply nobody's concern!

Can any system be other than bad that is not conscious of its own aims, that does not possess a fixed plan, and that acts according to the current exigencies of party requirements? Is it conceivable that any business or any estate or any worldly possession of any kind can be thus administered? Is it not a constant complaint among the ministers of the Continental countries with whom we have political or commercial dealings that it is in vain to listen to our proposals, since from day to day they know not what the next British Ministry will do,

or whether it will completely reverse the policy of its predecessors?

No doubt the Liberals of the early part of the nineteenth century had much to redress. All honour to the noble efforts of Lord Grey, and those who worked with him, to sweep away the corruptions of the old Electorate, and place the representation of England upon a more equitable basis. But what more damning indictment can be brought against a nation than to allow its politicians to barter away its privileges and put up its electoral franchise to auction for each political party to bid for in turn, each offering a larger slice than his predecessor, till we find ourselves at the end of the nineteenth century without any conscious volition or expressed determination of a part or a whole of the Electorate, in possession of an unwieldy, ever-increasing Empire, with ever-widening responsibility entrusted to the tender mercies of a simple democracy, whose law, social and civil status, and forms of representation remain those of a pure aristocracy, with an ornamental king for a figure-head nominally at the head of the nation but in reality holding no share of power in the national commonwealth. When foreigners ask us why we keep a king, when we have robbed him of his place, his use and his meaning, and do not trust him even with the powers of a republican president, we reply, with that logic which distinguishes the Briton, that as we do not pay our members, our king does not cost so much as the Congress of the United States or a Chamber of Deputies of France or Italy, and that as we are a highly loyal people—whatever that may mean—and are attached to the royal family, and prefer to play at Monarchy instead of Republic, we see no reason for discharging him.

It is in this invertebrate condition of our national organism that is to be sought the explanation of the Boer War and the other expensive wars and undertakings of which we have been guilty during the last fifty years, which, in the main, consist of taking advantage of any quarrel that arises between lesser potentates, and stepping in to interfere, imitating the lawyers by eating the oyster and returning the shell to the suitors. Here, too, we have the explanation of one of the greatest

sources of the universal hatred and jealousy with which the nations regard us.

“Here is this nation of shopkeepers,” they exclaim, “who never tire of telling us of their righteous motives and the lofty sentiments that inspire their expeditions among the half-savage nations with whom they trade, after they have grabbed nearly all the vacant spaces upon earth in order to sell their unconsumed stock of Manchester cottons and Birmingham hardware, and West of England cloths,—they boast in their conventicles and assemblies of being the chosen race for whom the world is reserved and the fruits thereof, who are destined to spread the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth, and even now they are scheming to lay taxes upon us in order that their Colonies’ and their own produce shall suffice for support and render them independent of the rest of the world.”

An admirable dream, forsooth, if it can but be realised! Alas! had we not allowed ourselves to be seduced by the honeyed speech of Cobden, which so wound itself about the British heart that Free Trade became a religion which it was heresy to modify or dispute; had we framed our municipal laws in such a way as to give our own people the full benefit of Free Trade; and if, before making these vast acquisitions to which the Mother Country is but as one in a hundred, we had federated our possessions upon a rational basis—we should now instead of a paper Empire and a king with a paper imperial-crown emanating from the brain of an enthusiastic Jew, possess a real Empire and a real Constitutional monarch with corresponding powers! For of what avail is a loosely-knit agglomeration of heterogeneous nations at our tail, linked together by no tie save that of common expectation of profit, and casually administered by a body of well-meaning amateurs whose qualifications usually consist in a nice turn for oratory combined with an absolute ignorance of business! As for the connection of those boasted Colonies with their Motherland, by far the greater bulk of the human beings of which they are composed, if called upon, could scarcely tell whether England was an island or a continent; and though there can be no doubt that wherever we take up the sword we shall never lack defenders in those that have sprung from our

loins in Great Britain over the seas, we must not be misled by that love for fighting which is inherent in the British blood, or cherish the delusion so commonly held at the present hour that our Colonial cousins would dream of sacrificing their most valued possessions of political autonomy and independence, to say nothing of sharing the cost of our military and naval expenditure, in order to convert that paper Empire into a real one, which, while it tickles the British ear, causes the profane foreigner to gibe and jeer at us, and secretly intrigue for our ultimate disruption.

All history proves that none but a strong central Government or a highly centralised Administration, usually under a despotic monarch, has ever been able long to keep its Colonies together. What is won by the sword must be held by the sword, and the hand that grows rich by the sword is usually palsied by the enervating effects of the luxury and commercial wealth which follow in its wake. What reason have we, then, to hope that we shall escape the common destiny? The Boer War, in few words, is the story of a strong people who deliberately watch a weaker neighbour arming herself for aggression and who calmly bides her time, relying upon her strength to crush her. When the time, however, for crushing came, so ill-laid were her plans and so completely at fault her machinery, that it may be truly said that England reeled, and still reels, under the blow inflicted by a handful of farmers struggling to be free.

That little war and the measures immediately resulting from it, including the pacification of the territory so acquired, and the introduction of a new administration to work its vast territories profitably, will increase England's financial responsibilities to something like 300 millions of money. She has groaned under the terrible burthen of a disaffected Ireland for well nigh six centuries. Heaven only knows how long this new burden will, like the old man of the sea, cling to her unhappy back and prove to be another Ireland worse than the first.

Nor is this the full measure of her stupidity and thoughtlessness. By the gradual decline of power originally seated in the highest places we have tossed the critical destinies of

building up an Empire to a majority of the ignorant, the thoughtless, and, in short, those who have the least stake in their country, not certainly, as I have shown, designedly of a set purpose, but fortuitously and casually sliding downwards to a political future of which we can foresee neither the limits nor the boundary, with a waning Exchequer, a swelling Budget, commercial profits declining, important industries threatened, universal luxury and profusion on the increase, while the only consolation that our politicians can offer us is, that we hold an Empire on which the sun never sets.

There is yet another evil which follows in the train of party politics and constantly goes its footsteps.

No more deeply corrupting agency exists than the ties of common politics—or one that more readily overrides the claims of Honesty and Justice.

In Ireland, Scotland, as well as in England, numberless proofs are constantly afforded of the commonly recognised tendency among the unpaid Magistracy to favour those who belong to their "side" in politics——! What, then, must be its effects upon the less educated and less high-placed. In Ireland the sentences (in prosecutions) are generally supposed to depend entirely upon the political colour of the "bench," and "Masonry"—notoriously—besides being quite unworthy of a free and civilised nation on the grounds of secrecy if for no other reason—obstructs the course of justice to a degree which is alike subversive of Morality, and ruinous to public order and security.



## CHAPTER X

### EDUCATION

TIME was when Oxford, through the number of her schools and the fame of her professors, eclipsed the universities of Paris and Padua. Her zenith was reached early in the fourteenth century, since which time she declined in the number of her students and the fame of her professors with remarkable evenness, until the depth of her degradation was reached in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Mr. Gladstone, the faithfullest of her sons, was compelled, however unwillingly, to take up the painful duty of reforming that *Alma Mater* which he loved so well—after vainly endeavouring by friendly advice and public entreaty to shame her authorities into setting their houses in order.

It is a singular, if authentic, commentary upon our "Glorious Protestant Reformation" that, however magniloquently its authors and apologists declaim upon the slavery of the intellect, and the enforced ignorance of the people and the opposition of the ancient clergy to the education of the poor, while in pre-Reformation days, by continued and frequent injunctions of the Holy See, each bishop was bound to maintain and provide teachers for his cathedral school and see that in every parish a similar school was provided for the poorer sort, the entire fabric should speedily fall to pieces under Queen Bess's new regimen, indifferently supplemented as it had been in her father's reign by the establishment of a handful of ill-endowed Grammar Schools. Indeed, the condition of public facilities for learning, in short, Education for the people, declined to such a point under the vivifying rays of the new religion that the later divines looked rather to Germany and Switzerland, and later to Scotland, for their intellectual support and nourishment.

I have before adverted to the astonishing faculty which the English possess above all other nations for hiding the proverbial "skeleton in the cupboard" with a skill which other nations may well envy. To her alone is given the wit to dress up the aforesaid skeleton on public occasions and trick him out so gaily

as not only to delude their hearers, but ultimately the speakers themselves.

At the very time when Mr. Gladstone first undertook, and with a loving hand finally carried out, the Augean task of cleaning the foul stables of Oxford and Cambridge by compelling the heads of colleges to something approaching decency in the management of their vast revenues, it is amusing to note in the speeches of the Right Reverend Lords in Parliament no jot or tittle of shame or self-reproach at this state of things, while obstinately striving with all the energy and skill of their united talents to defeat a measure of public right which involved the plainest and simplest applications of the moral law. In accordance with what we have observed when speaking of the absorption of the monasteries and chantries in a former page, the greater number of the vast revenues of our universities and abbey churches and hospitals, in common with the valuable chantries which the eighth Harry had swept into his pocket, were chiefly composed of charitable bequests of pious Englishmen and women, who confined, as a rule, their benefits to either religious people, or church students, or the indigent poor, moreover, appending and making it a "sine qua non" to the enjoyment of such benefits that certain prayers and frequently masses (or other usages swept away at the Reformation) should be maintained and annually performed.

In accordance with what I have before observed as to the wholesale seizure of the goods of the Ancient Church by its State-appointed successors affording the only plausible pretext for conferring wholesale the benefactions of bygone Englishmen to uses which they obviously would never have sanctioned by the very terms of their grant from the Reformation onwards, it became a matter of common practice to ignore the founder's bequests and pocket the revenue, construing the founder's views with such truly British liberality towards themselves, that to give one instance among many the Mastership of Holy Cross enjoys an income of £500 a year as present value of a bequest to supply all comers with beer and bread, while Charter House, in London, and Christ Church, in Oxford, and numberless others translate the founders' "poor scholarships and indigent clerkships" into a useful provision for the cheap education of the sons

and relatives of their managers and directors. In short, the revelations of the Commission appointed to inquire into the management of the University Funds indisputably earned for Oxford and Cambridge, in the place of the stump-orator's usual appellation of "seats of learning," the titles of "seats of corruption and peculation." However, in spite of the determined stand made by the English Bishops, duly buttressed by hypocritical if learned disquisitions in the usual vein upon the vested interests, disadvantages of innovation, respect for old usages, levelling tendencies of the times, etc., which would seem incredible if it were not a well-known fact that the Right Reverend Fathers in God have invariably opposed every measure that has ever been proposed for the amelioration or reform of themselves, their chapters, their cathedrals and their colleges, or the education of the people—disclosed to the public at large the painful fact that it was not to the bishops of the State Church that they should look for reform and progress in religion or education. The ball thus set rolling by Mr. Gladstone was taken up by the noble band of self-devoted men who shed an undying lustre upon the Liberal name by their up-hill efforts, in spite of the determined resistance and hostility of the Established Church, to first persuade the English people of their national deficiencies, and, in the second place, convert the Electorate to a scheme of compulsory and universal public education.

"It must be remembered," said Mr. Gladstone in effect, while presenting the resolution to the House of Commons in 1869, "that our system of education, if system it can be called, is the worst, the most discreditable and the most indefensible in the entire civilized world."

Alas! for the apostles of Cant! These terrible Liberals with unpleasant perseverance persisted in successively producing each cherished cat from the bag in which the State and its Church had so carefully hidden them for well nigh two centuries!

In case it should be urged that I hold reactionary views, and would have England hang back in its career and her sons crippled in the race of life, I will at once admit that, hasty and thoughtless as was the 1870 settlement, it formed a suitable counterpart to the ill-fated compromise effected by Elizabeth, which was expected to sweep Puritans and Papists all into one

net, and by fusion, in the end, developed a mixture of the two, which, satisfying neither, produced that ludicrous mixture which, while devouring the entire religious endowments of the State in its own greedy maw, shedding from time to time new sects, in the course of ages has left us a divided nation, distracted in politics, religion, society, and learning, endowed us with the eternal plague-spot of Irish rebellion in our midst, and a pauper population handing down disease, dirt and vice to generations unborn. Surely a dear price to pay for a State Church whose chief superiority over the old Church consists in a home Pope instead of a foreign, the Cup for the laity, an English Prayer Book, and wives for the Clergy.

None who had been used to see the condition of the London and Liverpool streets can but rejoice at the material results of that educational measure, even though constructed with the sole object of placing the toiling millions of the country upon the same level as their more fortunate Continental rivals. For though it failed, as is now admitted on all hands, to attain the purpose intended, its success was conspicuous in one direction, that of clearing the streets of London and still more noticeably those of the other great cities, whose condition, which before that date rivalled the worst parts of New York, or the Ghetto of Hamburg, or Frankfort, was by the indirect influence of the School Board Authorities, in the course of twenty years, completely transformed.

How truly British, however, is the upshot of all these labours. So practical and business-like a people are we, that having at last composed the religious differences which raged around the eager ministers who strove in vain like wind-bound mariners to steer their frail bark through the surf of sectarian hate and party politics—after all this toil and trouble—it is now found in the Year of Grace, 1904, that the Act of 1870 ended in pleasing nobody, and was just such another compromise as Elizabeth endowed us with, along with its compensating disadvantages of three centuries of religious strife, with the result that we are now all at one in the conviction that the last thirty years and a trifle of 120 or 130 millions sterling have been wasted in popular education ; while it would appear that with a little more tact and time and a more delicate hand in composing religious

differences the whole of this money would have been saved to the nation by the voluntary subscription instead of compulsory inclusion of the militant sects affected.

We have heard of the Genii of the Arabian Nights whom magicians used with the waving of a wand to develop from the smoke of a wood fire, which rising aloft solidified and formed a huge, hideous, frowning figure. But why go to Bagdad when we British have such a remarkable talent for raising these genii or spirits of evil that tower up and frown over humanity, and once raised not even legions of men can destroy? First we have the glorious Reformation, next we have the great political fissure, Stuart *versus* Orange, and lastly, we try to reconcile our scheme of education by a system which will pacify the jarring sects. And with what success? Why, simply that we have raised another monster which not even a hecatomb of British children shall appease.

Must I quote Dr. Clifford, or the Bishop of St. Asaph, or Cardinal Vaughan? Do we not know by heart their complaints on behalf of their several communities? Is there a section of Englishmen or even an individual that is completely satisfied?

Nevertheless we had distinctly before us not only the Scotch system to copy with its undoubtedly successful results, but we had also the alternative of choosing the system adopted in Canada or Germany. But no, we must needs satisfy the warring sects, the privileged hierarchy of the Established Church, and, above all, Mrs. Grundy, and though we have practically disestablished Christ in England by the admission of the Jews in our National Legislature, yet, forsooth, "we must assume a virtue if we have it not"; and therefore the simple plan of making each sect maintain its own children with a Government grant for efficiency in non-religious subjects can never be accepted because the various apostles of Cant of whom each Parliament contains a never-failing supply, however practical be the method suggested, refuse to be a party to endowing with public money the education of any sect but their own! Finally, all agree upon this, that though all are equally contemptuous of the particular variety of Christian religion confessed by their neighbours, not to speak of a large minority who deny Christ altogether, such is the overwhelming power of hypocrisy in our national Parliament

that wild horses will not drag them to the socially damaging conclusion that where the nation is split up into a thousand varieties of political and religious opinion there is no remedy but to secularize education entirely and leave the religious instruction of children to their ministers by supplying an hour or two of religious instruction in the week deducted from the secular schedule. Then let us for a moment consider the admitted conditions which are inseparable from such a compromise, and how far the demands of common sense and true education have been served during the last thirty years. The ineffectual character of our legislative machinery to obtain a given end is too well known to deserve anything but regret. We find that Party Politics, superadded to our Religious distractions, have produced a system which at the end of thirty years is found by the entire nation to have satisfied nobody, while it has plunged nearly every borough in the country into debt, filled every town with factious parties who fly at each other's throats and fail to agree on any point except in laying their plans so that when they come into office in their turn and oust their enemies, they may brag about Educational Reform, Retrenchment, or Progress, while one and all concur in clapping more burdens upon the unhappy ratepayer. Here, again, let us incidentally note the absence of public sense of justice, which I take to be the result of Party Politics and its exigencies, gradually blinding public men to general principles, and accustoming them to regard all public acts as subject to compromise, till they end by losing all distinction between good and evil. For what can be more grossly unjust than for the State to determine the condition and the manner of instructing the youth of its nation, enforcing its exercises under severest penalties, and invoking the power of the law to compel attendance, depriving parents of their natural right to be supported by their children, even though they are unwilling to receive the religious teaching of the State-erected School Board, and are consequently obliged, however poor, to maintain schools of their own, yet forced to contribute to the State brand of Education without any control whatever over its expenditure, or any power of determining what that Education shall be. Is this not a galaxy of injustice? Is it possible that any nation should inflict such a complicated series of unjust acts

and yet escape popular indignation? What is the result upon the national conscience? Must it not be dulled by such characteristic exhibitions of callous indifference to personal rights and personal grievances, trampling upon consciences and family prejudices, and expecting payment for a fancied public advantage—like some vast Jaggernât bruising and mangling body and soul alike.

Again, with regard to the quality of its Education, would not the intelligent ministry of an intelligent nation, before attempting to enforce universal education upon an unwilling people, begin by considering how to adapt its method of instruction to the needs of the various sections of population under its control? Would it not begin by considering where the needs of the country folk differ from those of the town folk? or if in doubt, as it might well be, would it not, if honestly desirous of conferring a real permanent national benefit, assemble a congress, firstly for the full discussion of the principles, and secondly of the method for carrying these principles into practice, and lastly endeavouring by every means in their power to ascertain what the views and experience of the parents in varying localities would suggest? The answer to this seems to be, Yes! but for the curses of the Reformation and Party Politics.

It is often said that nothing is easier than to criticise more especially after the event. No doubt we are always very wise after the event, but what must we think of the collective wisdom of the country as expressed by leading authorities, or what must we think of the machinery of representation which we boast of so loudly as the most perfect in the world, when we neglect so obvious a preliminary of a universal system of education as to consult the persons affected, and decide by patient inquiry and study, if the instruction imparted is likely to suit the varying requirements of the pupils? Here, again, we mark the universal prevalence of tall talk over common sense: nor can it be otherwise in a Democracy.

All experience has shown us, all history demonstrates beyond cavil, that whenever a nation through weakness or folly, as in the case of our own notable system of Party Government, by the same simple process of counting noses and putting up public interests to auction by calculation of votes thereby obtained,

has the incredible folly to hand over its vital concerns to the most ignorant of its body, two things necessarily follow—first, that the said ignorant people will infallibly choose, not the most practical, nor the most wise, nor the men most possessed of common sense, nor indeed the men who are possessed of any quality which is likely to forward the interests of the community, or the members of which it is composed—but the men who attract most by their eloquence, or fascinate by their showy external qualities.

When the Japanese embarked on their enterprise of national reconstruction with that thoroughness which seems to characterize them, having decided that their religion was incoherent, and in many ways preposterous, they deliberately started a Commission of Enquiry which they directed to examine all the religions of Europe. Excellent as were their intentions, it was found to be impossible to uproot the national superstitions, though it is believed that the Ministers in their wisdom constructed out of the multifarious fables of the Old World a religion the like of which the world had never seen. It certainly fell flat and was consigned still-born to the pigeon-holes of the Yeddo Archives.

When travelling in Japan, I was greatly struck with the practical common sense of that remarkable nation in dealing with a universal brand-new compulsory system of education. Roughly speaking, they considered that three classes of instruction should be imparted, while in practice these, as far as may be, were subdivided into many others. For the country they provided public elementary classes, consisting of a large square, enclosing a garden, plotted out so as to contain specimens of the various methods of culture of fruits, flowers, and vegetables, and on a small scale instructed the children in all the necessary elements of successful flora and agriculture.

This enables the child who is taken out of the fields at once to respect and esteem highly that work which in England he learns only to despise and undervalue, while it teaches him the very best method known of carrying out his work in accordance with the latest improvements of Science and Industry. Nor is this the only advantage. The mind of the city child is obviously more receptive of new facts and new ideas than his country



congener. The country-bred boy, as all the world knows, is better informed upon country matters, and his interest being naturally centred upon such, nothing is more difficult than to secure his interest in any objects which are external to his observation.

There is nothing recondite in these remarks, nothing that is not within the reach of everyone's knowledge and everyone's observation, and yet our system is avowedly in direct and distinct contradiction of these two well-known and elementary facts.

The general lines upon which instruction is fashioned in England is, "All children are alike." There is no fool in the entire country that is not perfectly aware that every child differs from its neighbour far more than a tree of one species differs from its fellows in the forest. And yet we persist in treating every child alike, and dosing him with exactly the same amount, as if we were dealing with a row of pint pots each destined to contain one pint of Imperial knowledge with the Government stamp, and finally in our wisdom enact that that fixed amount is to be administered to every child alike, whether sickly or strong, wise or otherwise, gifted by nature with physical rather than intellectual endowments, underfed or full of animal life and spirits.

Whether there be or be not any marked difference of opinion upon these matters, nearly all parents seem to agree that the results are exceedingly unsatisfactory, and I think it is not too much to add that if the foregoing words are, as I believe them to be, unanswerable and plain as the noontide sun to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear, it flows from this as surely as the river to the sea, that our aim and the whole aim of a really popular system of education should be entirely directed to convey such instruction as is common to all in the simplest, plainest manner, and, with the least possible waste of time, by which I mean the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), and beyond that the Syllabus should be accommodated entirely to the known capacity of the scholar, and, as far as may be, the bent, and secondly the probable future position in life which he expects to occupy, the higher and more intellectual branches of learning being entirely reserved for that insignificant minority which in the course of its earlier instruction should chance to display

such exceptional qualifications as to justify exceptional treatment. In short, the whole aim of rational instruction should be to improve the child's material prospects, while considering the qualities that Nature has endowed him with in such a way as to give them the highest effect, and the highest aim of a paternal government should be to devote all its educational facilities, and bend all its powers, to push on and advance the exceptional scholar to the highest grades of a scholastic or technical career.

One more colossal blunder to the credit of that "*Monstrum horrendum infandum ingens cui lumen ademptum.*" Surely Virgil must have foreshadowed the British Democracy when he penned these fateful words.

These hundred years and more every scientific, nay every rational, being in the British Empire has hoped against hope, that the all-wise decrees of the British Parliament would deign to smile upon them to the extent of shortening by one-half the labour of the youth of Great Britain—to say nothing of the assistance thus afforded to calculators and men of science of every rank and station more especially in their relations with their fellow-workers outside these islands—by substituting the decimal and metrical systems of money, weight, and measurement universally adopted by all civilised nations, as well as the Centigrade instead of the Fahrenheit thermometer, and last not least by a thorough reform of English spelling. Could a more favourable moment be imagined for such a sweeping change as the commencement of our public educational era to place ourselves in a line with other nations, while at the same time we lighten the labours of our children by one-half ?

Is there a teacher of youth or a scientific man, or a correspondent with foreign societies, or a lecturer, or anyone nearly or remotely connected with the instruction of youth, who does not bewail the enormous waste of time and money, to say nothing of human brains, which are required to master the elements of our applied arithmetic or to learn the spelling of our language, which only an exceptional memory can ultimately grasp, and which to most children presents so insuperable a stumbling-block as to prolong their term of education by at least two years ? It is but yesterday that Professor Max Müller

(whose name cannot but cause a thrill of painful emotion in every truly patriotic breast, for who can remember without shame that Englishmen were compelled to import a German professor to teach the English language to our National University?) and his followers succeeded in persuading us, greatly to our amazement and regret, that the greater part of the commonest Saxon words in use, whose erratic spelling causes perennial grief to generations unborn, and fills the foreigner, who attempts to learn our language, with anguish and dismay, are mostly if not wholly devoid of that sacred authenticity which has been attributed to them by the pedagogic wiseacres of the past. Moreover, our spelling having been for two centuries or more, like nearly everything else in Great Britain, left entirely to chance, there seems to be no excuse for prolonging an universal martyrdom; so that with the exception of those words which we have introduced out of the more civilized early vocabularies of Greece and Rome, no reason can be adduced for not reforming the spelling of Anglo-Saxon words, "Ab ovo usque ad mala" without compunction or hesitation.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRIVATE SCHOOLS

HAVING grappled heavily and laboriously, if unsuccessfully, with the momentous problem of public elementary education—spoilt alas! in great measure as nearly all our national measures must be by the very essence of things, through our religious dissensions as well as by reason of our party politics—we Britons are inclined in disgust to drop the subject altogether, and by virtue of our democratic vis inertia return once more to our central gravity of indifference and apathy. For deep down in the British mind and probably inherent in the Anglo-Saxon character are graven the axioms, "Let well alone," and "What is good enough for our forefathers is good enough for us." At least such are the arguments used by the overwhelming majority in this country when anything new is proposed of a revolutionary character. The second, firm, all-pervading opinion overlapping the former to a certain extent and more prevalent among the well-informed, but still working in the same direction, is an opinion based on strong conviction that private enterprise unaided and unstimulated (as elsewhere from above) will accomplish in England under the pressure of competition everything that is accomplished elsewhere at the suggestion or by the help of the Government.

It would be idle to deny that there has arisen a strong body of opinion in favour of State Socialism to replace the early Liberal Faith in the unaided virtue of Individualism. Now the Liberal measures, intended as they were primarily for the benefit of the entire community, were, nevertheless, from the very nature of things and by reason of the injustice wrought upon the greater number by the preponderating political power of the aristocracy, since they were intended to right that balance, necessarily more for the benefit of the lower classes than the upper.

Mr. Howard's and Elizabeth Fry's work for the prisons and gaols, and Lord Shaftesbury's admirable efforts, ultimately crowned with success, in spite of the usual strong opposition of the House of Lords and Bishops, on behalf of the helpless victims

of the mine-owners and manufacturers, together with Wilberforce's ever memorable efforts on behalf of the slaves of our West Indian Colonies, were all alike proofs of the waning power of Individualism and a rising belief in the necessity of a stimulus to improvement being given from above in order to right national wrongs and effect national improvement.

Were it not for this ever-present leaning towards the "status quo ante," from which our fellow-countrymen were with much difficulty by a due sense of national shame conducted through the powerful and persuasive oratory of Mr. Gladstone and his friends, one would naturally suppose that the first and most important duty of the Government, after attempting to set in order the educational facilities of the masses, would be that of closely inspecting and sternly regulating the equally chaotic educational institutions devoted to superior education. Yet here again the only excuse that I ever heard advanced for this outrageous indifference and apathy—which is now bearing full fruit in the technical and educational inferiority which is reported from all our Consular stations, and which is all too generally admitted to be the principal cause of our commercial failure—is the same old story of indifference and improvidence which seems to have become chronic amongst us. Some say, "We have done well enough in the past, so I don't see why we should change." Others again say, "Competition will soon produce a better style of young clerk, and when the pressure of trade begins to tell, the Commercial Schools will soon feel the effects. The result will be that they will have to give a better all-round education, at which foreign languages will be taught more efficiently and they will be forced to remodel themselves upon up-to-date principles." Thus we go on year after year, thoroughly aware, each one of us, of our national deficiency, while we watch British trade drop out of our hands, and continue to read day by day in the paper of the gross abuses prevalent at private schools. One day we read of boys at Eton, which we look upon as the mirror of all other schools, with difficulty escaping from the horrors of a fire against which no precaution of any kind had been taken, and find that boys were burnt to death because bars had been placed across their window to secure that discipline which it seems it is impossible to obtain without

such primitive methods ; or we are startled with the almost unanimous accounts of cunning schoolmasters who deliberately starve their pupils to enrich themselves, and actually compel the inmates of their school to eke out the imperfect and indifferent fare provided, by smuggling delicacies—or blush not to openly procure for their starving scholars the means of purchasing refreshment at their own expense, in relief of their schoolmaster's pocket.

Nor is this all. With Machiavellian astuteness, schoolmasters, since the dawn of English school history, have been careful to instil into the tender minds of their charges a principle which, however useful to cloak up the master's shortcomings, is fatal alike to the moral sense and sincerity of the scholar. One of the first lessons of childhood on entering a public school, and one which I hold to be most destructive and far-reaching in its effects, is the well-known axiom, "not to tell tales out of school." By reason of this immoral wall which is erected between the parent and the child it is not difficult for a cunning schoolmaster to impress upon the plastic mind of youth that it is unworthy of the public schoolboy to divulge school tricks and iniquities of any kind, and that it is unmanly to complain of the food, management, punishments, and other details of school life. Thus the schoolmaster shelters himself successfully behind a barrier of insincerity which can only be dispelled by the system which is adopted and considered necessary in every country but our own, namely, of placing all secondary schools under public supervision, with the safeguard of high-class independent visitors, to whom any formal complaint can be made under the seal of strict secrecy in the same manner as is common to all public institutions. Let in the light of day, and the "sneaking" schoolmaster will then be exposed to the rightful obloquy which he now succeeds in meting out to the schoolboy who "sneaks."

Here, again, is it national stupidity or downright apathy that causes our indifference to the obvious remedy—applied before our very eyes by all nations except ourselves to this most pressing need—to this most glaring anomaly which has so long and still stares us in the face at every turn? And yet it is almost a hundred years since Charles Dickens pathetically described the sufferings and wrongs of Dotheboys Hall and harrowed the public

feelings (for a few months) with his eloquent and burning words. Do not the papers daily reveal Dotheboys Hall in every part of the country, and does not every reasonable being amongst us know full well that what has occurred may, and probably will, under the same conditions, occur again?

The only possible explanation is that where wealth and a so-called Christian education, and exalted rank, aid, abet, and are ranged on one side—the inherent snobbery or exaggerated respect for position which differentiates the Anglo-Saxon from every other race and which appears to be compounded in equal parts of a weak sense of justice, an excessively slavish worship of wealth and power, and a great deficiency of personal dignity—all concur in barring effectually the way to reform. Nay, the very law exhibits the same bias, for do we not see every day clergymen brought up at the Police-courts for this or that offence or indicted before a judge for serious crime, or when magistrates or peers are brought up on grave charges, the whole attitude of Judges and of the Courts generally is almost invariably exchanged for one of tenderness, consideration, and a strong leaning to mercy? In the case of a lawyer or a parson—as far as my experience and reading go—it is safe to say that whatever his offence, it is fifty to one that he is whitewashed and got off by hook or by crook unless public interest or attention is aroused, or if the newspapers, as more often happens, have not been bribed to draw the public off the scent.

In all the cases with which I am acquainted where a school or educational institution of any kind has been attacked by parents for the grossest carelessness or neglect of the commonest duties—and it must be remembered that in England no one ever attempts such an action without the gravest cause and the fullest assurance of success—I have never known any attention whatever paid to the grievances of the parent, while according to the invariable practice of English Courts the greatest deference and credulity is exhibited towards the assertions of brother pedagogues, schoolmasters interested in similar situations, and the avouchers, clerical and otherwise, of their respectability and good conduct. And parenthetically I may here remark that I have never been able to see the sense of a Rule of Law which almost invariably obtains in our English

Courts. It matters little what is the act or crime committed, a light sentence is almost infallibly secured to the fortunate possessor of friends who are willing to come forward and to declare that they have always known the delinquent to have been a virtuous youth from infancy upwards, that he is of most respectable parentage, and up to the present hour held to be a model of all perfection! The Archdeacon of the Deanery in which the offender, if in good society, lives and moves, is sure to be brought up to forward the whitewashing process, as well as the family doctor (who is always referred to as "an eminent practitioner") to show that he has been vaccinated or treated for scarlatina, etc.—his long words telling enormously upon judge and jury—while at length the crowning benediction is passed by the Chairman of Quarter Sessions, who completes the farce by assuring the magistrate or judge with tears in his eyes that he has known him from boyhood upwards to be a most exemplary member of Society!

Now the common sense, and above all the logical view—though I should be far from insinuating that this has any weight with most Englishmen—would be simply this: that if a young man falls into bad ways in spite of having had an excellent example placed before him and all the advantages that education, position, or (may be) rank is able to confer, his offence ought to be deemed quadrupled in enormity, and a correspondingly adequate punishment should be inflicted; while, on the other hand, the less the education, and the more dismal, sordid, and wretched the surroundings and previous life of the offender, the more inclined should a magistrate be to deal leniently and use all the facilities that the Law can give for reformation and separation from the bad companions who have led him into evil. Moreover, it seems to follow necessarily from the practice of shortening sentences for good character, that where the character is bad an undue or excessive sentence should be inflicted upon an offender, which surely proves that the notion is one entirely repugnant to justice, and falsified by facts. No careful observer of human nature will venture to assert that the best way of weaning boy or man from a course of vice would be to notify him that he may go ahead with perfect safety, since no punishment will be inflicted upon him for the first offence. If I am met with the idiotic and



senseless theory of British Law as to a dog's first bite being freely licensed, I can only reply that the same class of Anglo-Saxon wits was clearly responsible for the twain.

Let us not, however, forget the enormous strides we have made during the last seventy or eighty years since Dickens wrote with such passion and feeling upon the wrongs of children and the neglect of schoolmasters. In those days it was still considered natural to flog learning into boys with the cudgel, as strangely enough it seems to have been in the old days of the Greeks and Romans, who, in spite of their refinement and close sympathy with the requirements and potentialities of youth, manifested by their harsh treatment of boys a firm belief in the advantages of severity, disciplinary and educational, which was not exceeded by Mr. Bumble of immortal memory, or Wackford Squeers himself.

There probably does not exist a human being in England that has reached middle age who is not well acquainted with numberless instances of Preliminary, Grammar, Middle-class, Upper-class, Higher-class and what-not schools, or at least one among such, where the grossest greed and brutality on the part of the Principal is not a matter of universal comment and common reprobation. In short there is no reason why such a state of things should not be universal. For upon one hand, menaced by the Libel Law, which is the protecting ægis or palladium of the Rogue in this country, Englishmen and women will think twice before they so much as whisper one word of detriment or reproach outside the domestic circle; while on the other hand, even if they have the strongest proofs of grievous shortcomings and grossest breaches of contract on the part of the schoolmaster, there exists such a wholesome dread of an English Court of Law and so little confidence in its operations that parents would rather "grin and bear" the worst extortions and suffer the greatest wrongs to purse or person than prosecute their author or endeavour to stir up a more healthy public opinion in such matters.

Now granted this state of things to be correct, and my view of the average parent to be also correct, is it wonderful that our so-called Higher-class Schools are frequently as nearly conducted upon the Squeers' system as the proprietor of the school thinks it safe to venture, especially as regards overcrowding and under-feeding, which are the two most prevalent faults, being, as they

undoubtedly are, the two methods by which most money can be made? The ordinary laws of Sanitary Inspection which protect the pauper in the workhouse, and even the pauper lunatic in the county asylum, are carefully suspended in view of that exaggerated British theory of respect of vested rights and personal liberty which positively enables the keeper of a school to contract himself out of the ordinary regulations to which every inferior school under Government is subject, under the ridiculous and utterly false pretence that he is simply entertaining a more or less numerous selection of guests, of more or less tender years, in his house, and that as such he is not liable to public supervision!

Needless to say that everywhere abroad the supervision of education of whatsoever kind is considered to be the first duty of the Government of the country. Secondly, licenses must be taken out, setting forth that after due inspection they have complied with the proper rules as to air, light, healthiness, breathing room, sanitation, etc., etc., without which no school of any kind may be opened without being exposed to the heaviest penalty of the law.

Preparatory Schools in England are usually started by a comfortable, middle-aged woman, who having nothing better to do, and having no children of her own and a large acquaintance, sees no reason why she should not turn an honest penny by getting the cheapest lodging house that she can find, bribing a doctor or two in the hopes of future practice to say that the aforesaid Establishment is situate in the healthiest part of the town, next advertise for any ragtag and bobtail who will come without a salary "for the run of his or her teeth"; if male, the same being described vaguely as an M.A. of Cambridge, or if female, as being possessed of several foreign diplomas and duly entered as such in the prospectuses of the school! As many pupils as can possibly be got are then crowded into any rooms which are not required by the mistress and her servants, and finally a charge is made for each child which no English parent ever dreams of disputing, and which varies according to the fashionableness or otherwise of the locality between five to ten times as much as any but Englishmen or women would dare to charge for similar accommodation.

I clearly recollect two preparatory schools which I have

visited and know well, both situated in two most fashionable seaport residential towns, where one—nicely built in a most salubrious place—receives little boys for £100 a year—where the boys are crowded together in a manner that, to my certain knowledge, would not be permitted in any gaol, workhouse, or asylum in the kingdom, and whose Principal having contracted in a definite manner through a printed programme to supply the pupils with mutton chops or eggs and bacon for breakfast, was proved by the evidence of several boys to have only provided mutton chops once in a term, eggs three or four times, and a substance which was believed to be thin slices of something belonging to a pig of the brawn variety alternately with cold bacon during the rest of the term.

The other school in question was simply a fifth-class lodging house into which an extraordinary number of children of all sizes and ages were crammed higgledy-piggledy, the larger ones obviously belying the statement on the prospectus that only children from six to ten were taken. One room alone served for eating and study, and the stench that pervaded the entire establishment from top to bottom would not have disgraced a gaol or workhouse of the eighteenth century. This, be it remarked, was not a charitable refuge for paupers, but a highly patronised and warmly recommended seaside school where children of the highest birth were freely despatched by infatuated or despairing mothers in the delusive search of a healthy and comfortable seaside home for their delicate fledglings.

Is it a matter of wonder, then, that our foreign friends, contemptuous as they ever are of our educational facilities, treat with incredulity the statement that our Government and parents are not indifferent as to whether their children should be at the mercy of the first tinker or tailor who having failed in business sees no reason why he should not open a school? And well knowing as we do that all but Board Schools are, as a matter of fact, conducted precisely on the same principles as a lodging house, corner grocery, or East End slop-shop, whose chief object is to make the largest profits, combined with the heaviest charges consistent with safety, in return for the lowest possible expenditure, is it not surprising that we are only just beginning to realise that the youth of Great Britain, in spite of the enormous

advantages enjoyed by our race from its priority in the field, is destined, unless strong measures of reform are adopted, to fall behind other nations in that trade supremacy which is to us, above all nations, of paramount importance, and which any failure to retain would assuredly destroy our most cherished national aspirations. Lastly, what can be more stupid and more opposed to common sense, even in a Democracy where the scum usually comes to the top, than to spend vast sums for the due instruction of the masses, while the rich are bereft of the protection of the law—the State considering in its wisdom that the education of those whose wealth secures them the possession of independence is a subject unworthy of their assistance or consideration.

## CHAPTER XII

### ABOUT LAW

APPROPRIATELY appendant to our political chaos a still darker abyss frowns before us; for what is more fearfully and wonderfully wrought than what we please to call our Law?

In extreme youth we are apt to regard our Courts of Justice as a sacred tribunal where god-like persons in wigs and scarlet gowns, which our unformed minds picture to us in the guise of Bible-illustrations of the Prophets of old, are sent down as a delegation from Heaven to redress earthly wrongs!

Must I recall to my readers' minds the traditional after-dinner speech, the inevitable Bench complimenting the Bar, and the Bar complimenting the Bench, or the references in the Press to those august personages? Alas! what a change when we pass behind the scenes and hear the cheerful solicitor before going into Court, when asked by the trembling client whether he thinks he has any chance of success. "No doubt, sir, you have a splendid case. You have all the right on your side; but whether you will get it or no depends so very much on what kind of judge you get. If you have old Jones, then he will go right against you. I should not wonder if old Brown or Thompson would suit you very well, but Heaven preserve us from Snooks! However, you must be prepared for the worst, for you know that our Law is proverbially uncertain. Ha! ha!" "But," says the excited client, "if you say I have the right entirely on my side and that the Law is perfectly clear, what risk do I run?" "Well, you see, the jury have complete power in the matter, and there is no knowing what view they will take of it. It is left entirely to them." Or else, perhaps, if the case is not tried before a jury, he will say, "There is no knowing what humour the judge will be in, or what view he may take of it. It depends very much on what he has had for breakfast." Or, possibly, client No. 2 says, "But surely there can be no doubt about my wrong, and the Law's first axiom is 'that for every wrong there is a right.'" "No doubt, sir, the

Law says so, but you must remember what Mr. Bumble said, 'My opinion is, that the Law's a hass.' "

In truth, the great misfortune in this and in many other British institutions may be summed up in a word. We lack a Revolution! The so-called Rebellion cannot be regarded as such, since it was in no sense, like the French Revolution, a universal or a popular one, in this that Charles I.'s execution, unlike that of Louis XVI., was practically the work of a few dozen conspirators, and thanks to our cold Anglo-Saxon blood, the wrongs of the people so painfully and cruelly redressed in France in 1792, and in other Continental lands in 1848, failed to stir our less emotional feelings; while their English reputed counterparts, the Chartists, though led by an excitable Irishman, mad enough and bloodthirsty enough to dare or do anything, were but very faint echoes of the French "Sansculottes." John Bull looked upon Fergus O'Connor as a strange if dangerous mountebank rather than a serious leader of a serious Revolution; and as for foreign anarchical notions he will have none of them.

What is, then, our condition? We are the slaves of Anglo-Saxon crude, brutal, ignorant legal customs, evolved out of an originally barbarous adaptation of the Mosaic Code, in which human life was cheaply reckoned and property was all in all. To this ever enlarged and ever growing mass of common law must be added numberless statutes, with other statutes on top correcting and amending the preceding, the former being mostly out of date and bearing no relation whatever to modern facts and diction. Add to this a totally different system of Jurisprudence imported from Rome, filtering through Canon Law originally applied by the Norman Clergy to all such cases as could possibly be construed as affecting, near or far, the interests of Mother Church, but now welded into the former system under the term Chancery or Equity Law. Next we have the "Reports" in countless volumes setting out the rulings of past judges upon given cases, and their interpretations of various statutes, with their confirmation or otherwise recorded in trials and appeals chiefly occasioned by the obscurity of the said statutes (which are mostly drawn up by members of a Parliament who neither understand the value of legal phrases nor the purport of the language which they employ)—and it may be safely said "there needs no

ghost from the dead" to tell us that out of such perplexing machinery only perplexing justice can be expected to issue. Nor are expectations unjustified. It is not my purpose here to write a legal treatise or to attempt to compass a subject, which would require a volume, within the space of a page. Here, as elsewhere, I propose to face and deal with only those facts and circumstances that all alike acknowledge and all alike accept as true. Whatever is debatable or even doubtful I am willing to hand over to the other side to be set off against my indictment of my fellow-countrymen. Even then I suspect enough will remain to justify the impeachment.

1. The exorbitant costs of "Justice."
2. Our law is of such a complex character and so overladen and overgrown with the senseless iteration and mysterious jargon which for centuries cunning clerks and lawyers have piled up to mystify, and so compel professional assistance, that it is almost impossible for any but a trained lawyer to carry out the simplest business transaction.
3. The utter disorder of ways and means for obtaining so-called justice, so that procedure, as it is called (save the mark), is a byword for confusion and chaos.
4. The utter want of definition, so that the legal language in one man's mouth means quite another thing from the same language in another man's mouth.
5. Absence of codification: so that the average Englishman is totally unable to ascertain Law upon any given point; and while nearly all other civilised nations have their Law—criminal and civil—so distinctly stated, as for example in France in a book that you can carry in your waistcoat pocket, and by reference to which you can clearly comprehend what your civil rights, duties and risks are and may be—the only resource of an Englishman in difficulty is to pay 6s. 8d. to his lawyer who will give him no better an opinion than he can form for himself; while if, as generally happens, the solicitor desires to shirk the responsibility of an opinion he refers the matter to a barrister (called counsel) where at the cost of a two- to ten-guinea fee he can obtain an equally valueless

“opinion” or rather guess at the existing Law, and in all probability will have to recur in the end to an expensive suit which may cost him a thousand pounds, *in order to ascertain what the Law upon a given point may be!* From which it seems to follow that such is our apathy, laziness, or indifference to what has always been considered to be the test and “ultima ratio” of civil prosperity that we care nothing for a clear, settled, and unchangeable Code of Law; unless, indeed, we are driven to the alternative of believing that the combined wisdom of our nation is utterly unable to compass its accomplishment. At all events the Law’s quality of Uncertainty has impressed itself so long upon us as to have become not only a household word and a universally accepted fact, but by process of time has come to be, so to speak, enrolled as a special British Institution, and is not infrequently alluded to in fond and loving terms as the “glorious uncertainty” of our British Law!

Taking these points as briefly as we can, the explanation usually offered for the enormous scale of charges, which, though somewhat reduced at a very recent date, when it must be confessed a very full and generous attempt was made to place the law at the service of poor creditors with almost painfully successful results, still remain far above those of our Continental rivals, is this, that in the first place, our judges are not as other judges, German, French, etc.; and secondly, they must be paid enormous salaries in order to be freed from all suspicion of interest, partiality or bribery. I will pass over the genuine Pharisaical ring of this truly British sentiment which comes easily and glibly from the professional or official mouth and finds so frequent an echo in the British Press, and merely observe, in passing, that up to a comparatively recent date our judges were rather remarkable for their partiality to bribes than the reverse, and only so lately as Elizabeth we hear of bitter complaints made by Ladies-in-Waiting of Elizabeth, that they had “missed their turn” in obtaining the coveted privilege of a suit. In the next place, let us not forget that by placing our judges in a position of such opulence and of such indepen-



dence that he is irremovable for any fault short of felony, he is placed upon such a lofty pedestal of pride and irresponsibility that he becomes at once subject to the universal law affecting those who are elevated above their fellow-men, and one from which only the noblest of God's creatures are free, with the result that he usually develops his besetting weakness of, say, extreme pride, or insolence, or anger, or tyranny, or the utmost indifference, or keenest sensitiveness to every wave of public opinion. It would be unbecoming to quote notorious instances of these several allegations. Suffice it to say that while human nature is such as it is, the safest restraint that can be placed upon a man in a high official post is not to make him irresponsible and fill his pockets with gold, but to place him in a position where he knows that the slightest aberration will produce his instant dismissal. In the fourth place, in order apparently to make it next to impossible for an angel to slip unawares into the seat of judgment, in which case my preceding remarks would not only be highly indecorous but entirely out of place, let us not forget how and why our judges are appointed according to the all-wise decrees of Parliament. In the words of the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge during the Tichborne trial, "perhaps it will surprise" the more ingenuous of my readers if they were to hear that nearly all our judges are and have been usually selected, not for their judicial qualities, nor for any domestic or public virtues which they are supposed to possess, but solely by virtue of an extremely vulgar if business-like bargain between the Ministry of the day and any loud-voiced, self-assertive pushing barrister who has kindly consented to curtail his fees by brow-beating the Opposition as a change from cross-examining witnesses. To comment upon this source of recruitment seems superfluous. By what process of reasoning it can be expected that a man who by brow-beating timid witnesses, bullying judges or juries, or lying with greater plausibility and shamelessness than his fellows has acquired notoriety at the Bar or in the columns of the sensation-seeking penny papers, should for these reasons be considered suitable material for a Judge to grow out of, or how a man who has ground his wits perennially to prove that black is white or *vice versa*, should develop a strong instinct for

abstract Honesty and Justice, is surely a problem that would absorb the united wit of a British Parliament to solve.

And here it is incumbent upon us to consider the causes of an undoubted British peculiarity without which the numerous expenses attending, I will not say the attainment, but the hopeless pursuit of justice cannot be fully understood; for even at the risk of forestalling what must fall under another chapter, I ask, "How is it that we Englishmen allow ourselves not only to be trampled down but overridden by those who please to term themselves the learned Professions, and the Press, their fervent protector and never-failing mouthpiece?" The true British Pharisee will at once exclaim in the familiar language of the Press, the Stump, and the Senate, "Our Judges are more honest, our Barristers are more capable, our Directors are cleverer, our Engineers more able, and as for our Press, well—let it speak for itself." Thus the voice of Cant; but what says the "still small voice" of the British conscience which emerges somewhere in the region of his breeches pocket, and whispers in accents low and mild, "But, *do we* get something better for our money in England than elsewhere?" Or is it the Anglo-Saxon race alone that has the monopoly of skill and honesty?

What proportion these two opinions bear to each other it is difficult to say, but nothing is more certain than that the Anglo-Saxon is more sensitive than any other to what he ludicrously terms "Public Opinion," which he fondly believes to be the sum of Private Opinion, while in reality it is nothing more than the maunderings of illiterate and irresponsible scribblers, whose pens are at the service of the men who pay them best. Thus the apparent opinion of the British Public, as we have before noticed when treating of education, is the very opposite of the real opinion of the British Public; for the simple reason that the former represents the echoes of the Press, which again are the paid echoes of the voices of the parties interested, while the real Public Opinion, that is, the sum of the real opinions of the greater number of English men and women, if they do not serve the aforesaid interests, lack expression in the Public Press and consequently reach the public ear by reflected paths, which reduce the murmurs of the many to an insignificant whisper. Nor is this all. The necessary result of this reaction is so

obvious to all those "who have eyes to see and ears to hear," that, since the Press has loomed so heavily upon Anglo-Saxon peoples as to give reason to believe that in the end it will press them to death—it has obtained such an ascendancy over the minds and hearts and brains of these nations, that while we can truly boast that "We never will be slaves" (*vide* "Rule Britannia" *passim*), Americans and English are, in point of fact, truth, and experience, more subject to Public Opinion (as it is termed, but which, in the light of the above explanation, may more truly be styled the Slavery of the Press) than any people on the face of the globe.

At the risk of making what may seem an irrelevant digression, I was greatly struck, many years ago, by hearing the well-known Composer Cav. Fabio Campana, when inveighing against that absence of taste with which unfortunately we are universally credited by the hungry foreign parasites who "batten" on our guineas, say "Zee English zay know nozing about art and zay have no taste. All they know ees vat their papers say. They look in their papers, 'Herr Rumstek finest pianist in the world, let us go clap him. Have you heard Signorina Frisihairi? No? Then you must go. All the papers rave about her,'" etc. Naturally I defended my fellow-countrymen vigorously according to my wont from this grave imputation, nor had I in those days the slightest suspicion that such a failing could truthfully be imputed to them. Several other excited foreigners immediately took up the theme and successively quoted such striking instances in proof of their assertions that I was, in the words of the famous Jeames of *Punch* "completely non-plushed." As years rolled on and my acquaintance with the world of Art and the great world outside became more extensive, I was forced to the painful conclusion that whatever our merits may be, and however determined we Britons are "never, never, never to be slaves," it is not impossible that the paradox can be explained by the well-known words of Hamlet, "Methinks he doth profess too loudly." In sooth your Englishman, though bold as a lion in the physical order, is usually in the moral and social "as mild a mannered man as ever cut a throat." Set him to scale a mountain's height or "seek the reputation at the cannon's mouth," or to keep the

enemy at bay in a forlorn hope, and he will acquit himself like a man; but put him in a ball-room in the centre of quizzing maidens and inquisitive dowagers and he will wince before their silly gossip and prying eyes and wish that the earth would swallow him up. Or again, set him among his fellows in his club, or public-house, or in the market-place, I care not where, and compare him with his Continental brethren. His courage deserts him, his knees tremble under him. Though he boils over with ever so noble a sentiment, or his breast thrills with ever so cruel a wrong, he must, above all, be cold and correct. He must keep himself well in hand; he must assume an indifference which he does not feel; he must bottle up his emotion. He does not DARE display love, poetry, sentiment, enthusiasm, sorrow, or indignation. He must preserve a neutral gravity, and tone himself down to the grey tint of dull British uniformity.

Endless explanations have been volunteered of this our national weakness. Some suggest modesty, others self-consciousness, etc., etc. Does it not seem more probable and more consistent that the explanation is as above? Whether from defects of education, or personality, or race, it is difficult to say; suffice it that it does exist, and that from this vice our trans-Atlantic cousins are almost entirely free, nay, I might say that they sin in the opposite direction. But let that pass. The very name of cowardice, like untruthfulness, causes the true Briton's blood to boil within his veins and each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon a fretful porcupine. Yet cowardice it is, call it what you may.

But it will possibly be urged, the connection is not so apparent between the subject of our theme and this admitted self-consciousness or social cowardice, or whatever it may be which the foreigners ever gibe at and resent, deeming it pride, morgue, spleen, and what-not, which they say sets up an insular barrier between the Briton and his Continental congeners; nevertheless, I submit that it is only a varying manifestation of the same weakness. Englishmen do not dare to speak the truth as they see it. They would rather follow any lie, any impostor, any false teacher if he has a good following or is "taken up" by the newspapers, than run ever so slight a risk of being in the painful position of an unpopular minority or drawing the public

eye upon them or being the object of social disapproval; for this, alas! is the British touchstone of truth, honour, virtue and wisdom, and beyond it lies Gehennah!

There is no need of a non-lawyer to set himself to prove that our procedure is the most cumbrous, the most disconnected, the most illogical of any civil state in Europe, since so many judges have expressed themselves very fully thereon, and displayed their disgust in the plainest, if least judicial language. The effect of all this is that however simple the "action" and however common and hackneyed the suit, for one unskilled in law it is almost impossible without recurring to the assistance of one accustomed to practise in the Courts, to know in what court the case shall be tried, to whom application must be made to try the suit, and what are the forms required to bring the matter before the Courts. Even our trans-Atlantic cousins, whose adherence to our worn-out forms is a touching tribute either to their loyalty or imbecility, have long ago swept away the ridiculous practice of compelling their client to put his case before one man in the vain hope that that man so confided in will be able to explain his case to another person yecept a Counsel or Barrister, in the insane expectation of the third intervener having a remote chance of explaining the whole business and carrying conviction to the ear of a fourth person called a Judge, or twelve other persons called a Jury, or both.

There are few of my readers that have not lost or won money on a horse-race. Have they ever reflected on the extraordinary parity between British law and the British turf? Few there are, moreover, unless the very young, who, gaining a better insight into the methods of the turf, do not abandon, in disgust, an institution which promises so little advantage to the honest and offers such enormous prospects to the rogue. The truth is that the investor in the game of law is on all-fours with the foolish investor in a horse-race. The similarity is almost complete between the two conditions of things. How shall we expect, with any reasonable chance of success, the horse we back to win through its merits, when, however capable the horse may be, there are the various and, possibly, divergent interests of owner and trainer and jockey to contend with, all or any of which may upset the bettor's calculation? I will not venture to

carry my parallel as far as the Judge, lest it should be said that I cast an imputation on the honesty of a being in whose wisdom and purity every right-thinking Briton has implicit confidence. Suffice it to say that even admitting that our judges on the race-course or the bench are equally impeccable, is it not self-evident that human testimony being such as it is, and granting what everybody must admit and all can bear witness to, namely, that the simplest event passing through several mouths is apt to assume a totally different form from the original—it follows with regard to a story, plaint or contention which passes through the hands of suitor, solicitor and barrister before it reaches the judge or jury, each of whom may form a different opinion and each swayed by conflicting interests, passions and prejudices, that the chance of the ultimate triumph of justice is more than problematic.

Setting aside technical details, without attempting to discuss the more debatable points at issue, it may be briefly said that the main difference between foreign and English methods of law is a more logical division of subjects, a more exact definition of rights and wrongs, and causes of action, a simplicity and correctness of language which enables every educated foreigner, nay, requires him, as an obligation of his position, to digest and comprehend not only the exact limit of his rights as a citizen, but the exact point at which his actions cease to be legal, as well as the precise steps to be taken to redress his wrongs or procure an enforcement of his rights. As to the conduct of judicial business, the foreigner is marked by greater soberness and self-restraint, the witnesses are treated with that marked courtesy to which they are entitled as independent witnesses of the truth, instead of being reckoned in the brutal British fashion as men or women who have bound themselves for money to back a particular view, a disability which at once strikes at the very foundation of all conceptions of justice and propriety; and, above all, barristers or pleading suitors are restrained by the judge from exceeding the bounds of honesty and sobriety. The black-guardliness of the British barrister and his coarse insinuations would, abroad, be instantly repressed wherever exhibited. The arguments used by both parties are handed in in writing, and subject to the revision of each party; the evidence given by

witnesses is also subject to deliberate revision by the witness himself before being accepted as final, by which means the ever-present danger of justice being frustrated by the cunning or impudence, or intentional deception of the cross-examining barrister, is avoided, and, finally, no witness but the one giving evidence is permitted in the court at the same time, which is, obviously, an excellent safeguard against the common and ever-recurring danger of collusion among venal witnesses for the purpose of compassing a common end.

Two things seem, above all, to strike the average non-professional suitor with experience of the Law Courts. First, that owing to the excessive and extraordinary care exhibited by our Legislators in their legal methods and procedure in order to prevent the possibility of a man who is innocent being condemned, the leaning of justice towards the criminal, or alleged criminal to speak more correctly, is of such a patent, palpable, self-advertised quality, that not only in England, but with even greater certainty abroad, the wide impression prevails that a rogue who knows a little law can snap his fingers at all risks whatsoever. The second is a corollary of the first. In order to protect honest men from having their motives or character impugned or their reputation damaged by interested or scheming scoundrels, the Libel law is constructed in such a manner as to make it more dangerous to expose a rogue or denounce a scoundrel than it is to commit the original act of which he is accused; the result being, that partly from the operation of the Libel law which may be broadly looked upon as the Palladium of rogues or the Magna Charta of rascality, and partly from the tenderness of the criminal law, which, contrary to the practice of all other countries, lays down the rule that all men until actually convicted, however strong the *prima facie* evidence may be against them, must be treated with the same consideration as if they were honest, the situation of a rogue is raised to such an enviable pedestal as not only to affect the moral status of the whole community, but serves to depress and discourage the well-intentioned, while attracting evil-doers, pickpockets, revolutionary cut-throats and seditious schemers to our unhappy country from every part of the civilised world.

I know not if the greater number of Englishmen following

Marx, Lassalle and Mazzini, find a noble consolation in the fact that the dirty rags which are published in this land of the brave and the free, upholding every bloodthirsty and filthy doctrine that emanates from the mind of the basest of men, invariably do us the honour to belaud us to the skies, and say that, indeed, in England they find a home and a refuge which is denied (N.B. to rogues) by the sanguinary despots of their own less hospitable lands; but nothing is more certain than that this free, if reckless hospitality, which we pride ourselves upon extending to all the miscreants of the earth, forms a serious bar to our effective detection of crime.

In illustration of one of the views which I advance I cannot do better than cite an example, since an acknowledged fact is often worth a pocketful of theory. When residing at Spa in Belgium, during the summer months I happened to be driving with an English family who were staying in the same hotel, and in the course of our drive we suffered a collision through a couple of actresses whose acquaintance with the art of driving was of an exceedingly elementary description, and who, being suddenly faced with our larger equipage at a sharp turn in the road, pulled the wrong rein, with the result that our carriage, which was adhering tenaciously to our side of the road, came in contact with their pony-carriage, and hurled them with remarkable force and precision into the bushes that bordered the road. Though no great damage was done to the fair damsels in question, their anger and eloquent protestations rapidly assembled a crowd, and having duly ascertained the names of their alleged assailants they forthwith issued a warrant, and summoned us to appear before the local Juge de Paix. Now, in England, there would have been invariably a delay of a week or more before the case could be heard, with corresponding annoyance, and possibly expense to both parties. As to the vexation, insults, and possible results of the cross-examination in a case of this sort there is literally no limit in our "free and intelligent" English Judicial system. Anticipating this, the two ladies who formed our party (one of whom, being seated by the coachman, was well qualified to repudiate the evidence of the complainants) regarding their appearance in a Court of Justice as witnesses with a manifest abhorrence and distrust bred of the experience of an



English Police Court, at first flatly refused to defend our cause by presenting themselves as witnesses, preferring to pay all the expenses of the damaged pony-carriage and the ladies' attire for which a very considerable sum of money was claimed, declaring their determination if pressed thereto to leave the gentlemen to pay and fly to a distant clime. With much persuasion, however, and explanation of how these things are managed on the Continent, I induced the fair members of our party to enter the lists against the still unappeased actresses, who filled the town with their clamour and objurgations.

Now for the information of the more innocent of the fair sex, I may at once say, that as a matter of everyday practice, when a young lady is brought forward as a witness in any indifferent matter in an English Court of Justice, and especially in a Police Court, nothing is more usual than for the cross-examining barrister—that is the individual who attempts to shake the evidence of witnesses by playing upon their absence of mind, nervousness, or carelessness of statement—to invent imaginary charges against her virtue or her respectability for the sole purpose of disconcerting her and throwing doubt upon her evidence. Here, however, by the calm, orderly, and refined manner in which the suit was conducted, the groundless fears of the ladies of our party were quickly allayed, and a quick and triumphant conclusion to the case crowned our satisfaction by a favourable verdict in spite of the strong popular feelings which had been aroused by the loquacious followers of Thespis.

Again, the theory of English Law, which lays down the rule that the Judge must not interfere in any plea, language, argument, or device which the suitor or his barrister may raise in behalf of his cause has resulted in a license, a ribaldry, and a wrangling, with not unfrequent exhibitions of blackguardism of which no foreign Court can show a parallel, which must not only react against British respect for the Law, but undoubtedly acts as a strong deterrent in preventing respectable persons from entering its precincts.

To such an extent is this carried that I have myself seen the leading counsel of a Chancery Court, after being distinctly and categorically rebutted in his attempt to prove an illegal act on the part of his opponent, not only deliberately repeat in his

concluding speech the facts which had been shown to be entirely false, but on the principles of the French satirist, who advised critics to "throw plenty of mud, as some is sure to stick," avenged himself by founding *on the disproved facts* a most damaging charge against the defendant, to which, by the rules of procedure, his adversary was unable to reply.

It is surely needless to point out that a barrister's repeated allegation of fact after the same had been shown to be utterly false, was in the first place to insult the Judge (which apparently in an English Court goes for nothing) by insinuating that he was capable of being deceived by such simple and patent manœuvres ; secondly, to ignore the limits which even legal morality assigns to the English advocate, of confining himself to his own opinion or the strongest colouring that can be given to the same without an absolute distortion of fact ; thirdly, to lie, and when foiled in the attempt, to again resort to the same lie when there was no excuse for ignorance, was to exhibit himself as an inveterate and intentional liar for the direct purpose of frustrating Justice ; and finally, worse than all, to openly display (whether at the instigation of his client or his own it matters not) a determination to avenge his inability to gain his cause by a calumnious falsehood against the character of his vanquisher—making up a galaxy of blackguardliness of which the British Bar, as the French say, alone possesses the secret.

It is difficult to see why the morality of the Assembly-room, the Senate, or the Drawing-room should give way to the necessities or supposed necessities of the Judicial Tribunal: for while, undoubtedly, a speaker or advocate may with impunity allege in a public assembly what is false without incurring the imputation of a liar, so soon as it is proved upon scrutiny that he is misinformed or in error as to his facts, any persistence or repetition of the same is equivalent to a public declaration that he is not only a liar, but an intentional and inveterate liar ; if he proceeds still further to found an argument upon the aforesaid lie to the detriment of a third person, he stands convicted of blackguardism of the worst type ; while, where his opponent is either absent or by procedure unable to reply in his own defence, what before was an act of blackguardism pure and simple, attains the proportion of an act of cowardly blackguardism, which no circumstances can excuse or palliate.

Nor is it easy to see how the purposes of Justice can be served by such exhibitions as these, which are of such common occurrence among our British lawyers as to cause the law to stink in the nostrils of the people; nor can it be advantageous that the more orderly, quiet, and respectable members of the community not only account it a disgrace to give evidence, or to be in any way distantly connected with any proceeding in a Court of Justice, but openly avow their opinion to this effect, to the great increase of blackmail on the part of rogues, who take advantage of such indifference and dislike to threaten legal proceedings for the purpose of illegitimate gain.

Finally, as to the looseness of phraseology, which has long been our curse and our disgrace, since no codification or revolution has been attempted from a time in our history when a totally different language was in use, such are the circumlocutions, useless repetitions, and to such a point is it thought necessary to join to modern laws and settled language the more exact (but wholly technical, and at the present hour almost unintelligible) Norman-French of the past, that the simplest contracts, deeds, instruments and conveyances have to be placed in professional hands for execution, while the same instruments, even among our American kinsmen, who have adhered as closely as possible to our English law but refuse to tolerate our archaic verbiage, have been greatly modified and abbreviated.

Thus we suffer from the twofold evils of being compelled to call in professional assistance upon the most trivial occasions, and of devoting sheepskins galore, with corresponding engrossing charges, to matters that in the more fortunate Republic would be comprised in a half-sheet of note paper.

Again, what can be more totally opposed to the successful prosecution of felony, and the successful redressment of wrongs than the system of leaving the prosecution of all crime to private effort and enterprise, when all civilised nations, except our own, have long since agreed that the first and most elementary duty of a Government is to find out, pursue, and punish crime at the expense of the State, and reduce the expenses of private suits to the lowest cost compatible with efficiency? Nor is this the only point at which the excessive liberty sought and obtained by Anglo-Saxons here, as well as

in the United States, proves a stumbling-block to the enjoyment of our rights and privileges. Probably no more fatal blunder and one more far-reaching in its effects, can be imagined than that of neglecting to enumerate, register, and classify the subjects of this realm. In all other countries professing order and civilisation the State reserves to itself the right of regulating these matters with a view to possessing a clear and definite notion respecting the name, age, appearance, parentage, occupation and domicile of every member of the realm, and requires that each subject should register any important occurrence or change in their method of living. So that while, abroad, the police have every facility for detecting crime, or tracing the domicile, or passage of criminals, through the Domiciliary Registers which are kept in every Police Office; and while, moreover, every hotel or lodging-house keeper is compelled to notify or draw up on forms provided by the Police the name and full particulars of every inmate, and every householder to report to the Police the name and quality, and, if necessary, give information respecting the habits of any or all of its lodgers, our own Police are reduced in the detection of crime to the resources of cunning or accident, supplemented by a reckless and most expensive use of the public telegraphs and telephones, which usually begin as they end, in vain expense to the persons interested in punishing the criminal. As for the facilities afforded to crime in every department of business transactions, it is not an exaggeration to say that liberty is here carried to such an excess that any crime committed in the course of business is usually regarded as a private matter of difference in accounts, of which the Law, if sufficiently highly paid, is willing to take cognizance; though among men of business it is well known that no recourse to Law is ever made with any prospect of success, and is consequently rarely, if ever, resorted to.

We have only to examine the daily reports of cases in regard to Company defalcations, and the bogus companies erected by designing rogues for the sole purpose of abstracting money upon false pretences, to discover that so wide is the latitude permitted by the Law, and so complete the freedom as to

monetary transactions between individuals, that there is scarcely any roguery or any method of plundering that cannot be safely and profitably conducted, provided certain legal forms are complied with, and certain well-known limits are not overstepped. Of such actions not the least striking result is, that oftentimes it is not the aggrieved creditor, but the successful robber, who, if well versed in Company Law, not only sets his unhappy victims at complete defiance, but is enabled by a judicious payment to the reporters, coupled with other well-known legal tricks and devices, to emerge from the dock with flying colours and the encomiums of the daily Press.

One of the most fruitful sources of evil, and one which affords the easiest opening for wholesale robbery, by companies as well as bogus firms, shops, and undertakings of all kinds, is the facility for personation or anonymous trading under fictitious names. As a natural corollary of this practice, it is common for rascally promoters and brokers of swindling companies to create fictitious shareholders by the simple process of passing large cheques through their hands. These clerks or unconscious instruments of roguery are duly entered for thousands or tens of thousands of fictitious capital, thereby inducing unsuspecting investors to believe in the stability of the enterprise. Such and similar methods of roguery, having never been specially legislated against, are among the commonest means adopted for decoying capital into the hands of unscrupulous scoundrels, whom the Law, however large the scale of plunder, is entirely unable to reach.

Few practices of English Law would seem more immoral in their tendency than the lenity that is exhibited towards Negligence of every sort. Manifestly in a savage state of life carefulness is not to be expected. On the other hand a complex and intricate civilisation demands, like a delicate piece of machinery, the highest care in order to prevent grave accidents, loss of life, and serious injury to property. I might cite here an incident which is fresh in everyone's memory, by which Long Acre was almost wholly destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of pounds wasted, for the sole reason that a careless servant of a motor company in that street, though repeatedly warned of the

danger, thought fit to paddle about with a hand-lamp in a small lake of petroleum. It is unnecessary as a matter of equity to demonstrate the enormous injustice which results from such reckless carelessness, and it might be safely predicted at the same time that little or no punishment would follow the crime. Equally obvious is it that such crimes will increase in number in direct proportion to their supposed immunity from punishment, and that the higher and more intricate our social organisation, the greater the necessity of protecting its members against negligence, not only because its recurrence will necessarily be more frequent, but also because more fatal in its results.

The Napoleonic Code, adopted by most civilised countries of Europe, provides a punishment of from two to five years' imprisonment, besides a fine proportionate to the wealth of the offender, for such cases of accidental homicide as would in England go entirely unpunished. Two cases that have occurred within the last few years, which received no punishment whatever, cannot but fail to impress most unfavourably the public sense of fitness and justice.

In one case, a young gentleman of one of our oldest northern families, who was reading during vacation, being taunted and jeered at by a farm servant, a girl of eighteen, for coming in empty-handed from shooting, was shot dead by the young sportsman; no evidence being given which could elucidate the matter beyond that they were known to be on friendly terms, the youth was acquitted and discharged without the slightest punishment of any kind. His friends, however, took a different view of the matter, and it was an open secret that the young man in question was of such a violent temper and reckless disposition that there seemed very little doubt that the taunt of the servant girl had angered him to the extent of taking her life.

A similar case which occurred recently was that of a footman who was discovered, by the rest of the household who ran to the spot on hearing a shot, with a discharged gun in his hand, and a fellow-servant, a girl of nineteen or twenty with whom he was known to be on friendly if not intimate terms, mortally wounded beside him. The same pretext was advanced in both cases, viz. not knowing that the gun was loaded and wishing to frighten the girl. There was clearly more excuse for the footman, who

presumably might be less experienced in the use of arms. In both cases the same plea was admitted and no punishment followed.

Now in France, and indeed wherever the Napoleonic Code is in force, the Judge would have the power of inflicting the heaviest fine consistent with the position of the offender, besides imprisonment from two to five years, which there is every reason to suppose would have been inflicted in these cases. These are not rare cases but rather of every-day occurrence. Probably ten such take place in England for one in France, partly from the universal cheapness and abundance of firearms and the absence of legislation confining firearms to adults, a useful piece of legislation often attempted in England, but never carried through Parliament. In all cases where there is no evidence of motive for killing, the Judge will rarely, if ever, inflict any penalty whatever. Obviously this condition of things is one which places the public safety upon an extremely insecure basis. The wild, reckless youth, the drunkard—whose escapades in motors, hotel bars, and public houses, and every place of public resort are so well known through the Press to all newspaper readers—are practically absolved from all obligations and the most elemental application of public law. They have only to persuade the Judge and the Public that they had no special desire to take any particular life in order to obtain immunity from the most reckless actions with the fatal result, so far as public safety is concerned, that self-control becomes for such persons not only unnecessary, but is necessarily never acquired, being in England wholly superfluous!

There is another practice of Law which is universal abroad and which might well be imitated at home. I have often remarked that it is not the unpleasant feature of the case or action which leaves a stain of prejudice against those who resort to our Tribunals so much as the consequential or indirect comments, often as fanciful as they are hypocryphal, of an ill-guided, sensation-mongering Press. For a small fee a suitor can obtain a completely false view of his case in Court put before the public, and nothing is more common than to hear a report of the "case for the plaintiff" to the total exclusion of any mention of the defendant. The heaviest penalties, I submit, should be incurrible by every newspaper who publishes the statements of

one side without that of the other. Secondly, no name should be published in a newspaper, however grave the charge, until he is committed for trial. This is so flagrant a practice and one so repugnant to the first element of justice that only the thickest-headed of nations, or perhaps it would be better to say only a nation which voluntarily submits to the slavery of the Press, would consent to a practice which, while it affords in the course of the year more sensational paragraphs and is the cause of more special editions, and rouses public attention to the great profit of the newspapers beyond anything else, must surely be admitted to run counter to every principle of humanity and justice. You can scarcely walk down Piccadilly without seeing on a poster "Another peer charged before the magistrates for criminal assault," or, "Frightful outrage by a Baronet," or, "Minister's son charged with fraud." Now what is the rationale of this? Simply that a British or American newspaper is licensed as a matter of course by a stupid and unreflecting public to make what money it can out of disasters, crimes, accidents, and every phase of human suffering, which it dishes up and serves to its customers in the manner it thinks most likely to please their palates. Profoundly immoral as this is in itself, it is surely still more inexcusable when, as in many cases, the offence is merely a technical one, as of a friend of mine whom I saw on the posters not long ago in the guise of "A Wiltshire Baronet charged with homicide." Here I confess, in common with many of his friends, to have supposed that he had been guilty of a very serious crime, and was much amused to see at a later date that the so-called homicide was purely technical, arising out of the fact that a carter using one of his (the Baronet's) farm roads after dark, had driven into a hole and broken his neck, whereupon an enterprising pettifogger of the neighbourhood had given advice that an action for technical homicide would lie against the Baronet for culpable neglect—the same being subsequently rebutted and cleared up by the discovery that the hole had been made by the parish itself for the purpose of getting materials for mending the roads!

Abroad, in such a case as this, ample remedy would be afforded. For if any proof of misstatement was afforded against the newspaper concerned, the editor would have to publish



at least three times in his newspaper any explanation which the injured person saw fit, however lengthy, to insert. And if it can be shown that for the purpose of selling a "second edition," the name of some well-known person is dragged into a disgraceful connection without the amplest proof or necessity—an event of every-day occurrence in London—heavy damages, in proportion to his position, could be recovered as well as a full apology thrice repeated in a prominent part of the offending newspaper. Every day we see the grossest attacks made upon well-known persons with a prominent heading, and a few days afterwards we shall possibly see a denial in an obscure part of the newspaper from the solicitor of the complainant which is not read by perhaps one-tenth of those who had read the original charge. Especially useful would this rule be in the cases of juvenile delinquents of good family, whose life and prospects are often blighted by a childish escapade which is prominently blazoned forth in all the newspapers of the land, until the matter comes to be sifted in a Court of Justice, when the bubble is pricked, and the so-called crime or charge imputed to them turns out to be nothing but a boyish freak or an ebullition of youth. In all such cases abroad it would be considered an indictable offence to divulge even so much as the initial, and even those few French papers who, I regret to say, have been lately led into bad ways by the example of the English and American Press so far as to cut jokes and make fun of the police cases, dare not run counter to the rule, and consequently are deprived of the personal flavour and that special element of spice which is so much appreciated in Anglo-Saxon countries, and which, it may be safely said, is nothing less than a gold mine to newspaper proprietors.

It has been said that every nation has the law which it deserves. If this be true of monarchical states, or states where the power resides in the ruler alone, what excuse can be made for a purely democratic country like England, of whom it may truly be said that "We are the State," "We are the sovereign people!"

The French boast continually of their Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, and never tire of calling themselves the sovereign people. But those who have been able to look behind the scenes and examine the real foundation of power in that land

and the sources and machinery of their administration, will easily perceive that the Great Napoleon in this, as in a thousand other ways, while giving to the people the shadow, was far too wise to yield the substance of authority. While reserving for himself the place of Mainspring in the machinery of the State to which every inferior post within the Empire was subordinate, each so cunningly subject to the officer above him, "maire de commune" under "sous préfet," and "sous préfet" under "préfet," the "commune" under the "arrondissement," and that under the "Conseil d'état"—the real power was centred in the one man at the wheel, the lowest post of all alone being elective. In order to tickle the public fancy the pretence was invariably set forth on every occasion that the "sovereign people" was the arbiter of its own destiny and the framer of its own laws, while, in fact, it was nothing but a carefully-dressed puppet which, while directed by the strenuous hand of a despot, was permitted "to lay the flattering unction to its soul" that it was indeed the master of its own destiny.

In the domain of Law, however, this centralisation or hierarchical administration seems to be the most effective method for enforcing that absolute equality of treatment and uniformity which is necessary to secure the happiness of a people, providing always its mainspring be not tampered with by the Executive Power.

Mr. Bodley, whose work upon contemporary France has met with much success, astonished, if not disgusted his fellow-countrymen by the lavish praise which he dispenses upon the Napoleonic system of administration and law, which he does not hesitate to say secures the most effective guarantee of life and property. The moment chosen for this pæan of praise seemed to the British Public the more inopportune, since falling as it did when British Cant, outvying itself in an exhibition of national self-glorification, carefully fomented by the omnipotent Jewish Press, was roaring itself hoarse in rage and indignation at what was found to be a scandalous failure of justice in the Dreyfus case.

In fairness it must be added that Mr. Bodley proceeds to remark that in this as in other ways the cloven foot is shown, by the excessive facilities afforded to the police of pursuing the

ends of justice, which may, unfortunately, too often be used in the interests of political tyranny, by domiciliary visits, the opening of private letters, and the examination of private papers, which, while giving a great arm for the detection of fraud and crime, undoubtedly form part of that astute policy which, under the simplest democratic forms, allows despotic methods to peep through.

It should be remarked, however, that in its main features the Napoleonic Code and its system of civil and criminal jurisdiction, which together form a perfect whole, has been ardently embraced by every civilised nation in Europe, since it has been found to be the only combination of effective police and criminal oversight consistent with public security, combined with a reasonable prospect of detection of crime.

In England, however, which by reason of the vicious circle above alluded to, be it action or reaction, or cause and effect, the Business and Jurisprudence of the country has sunk into a morass of verbiage, Norman-English phraseology, disused methods, and a hotch-potch of common and civil law, to say nothing of local customs, no escape seems possible to us from the slavery under which we groan, not only by reason of the necessary intervention of the lawyer in every transaction of business, barter, sale, and land conveyance, as by the hopelessness of any real reform short of a national revolution. Nor is it only the enormous number of legal partisans interested in upholding our present chaotic condition which tends to maintain the *status quo*. There is also to be considered the inability of the non-legal portion of the people to bring an effective reform to so highly technical and complex a subject.

No nation can call itself truly civilised whose code of laws is not reduced to the utmost simplicity of expression, so that it is not only capable of being understood by the meanest of its subjects, but stated in language of such precision that there shall be no reason why its meaning and provisions should not be within the reach of every individual however ignorant or mean. The morality of every-day life should be directly inculcated and taught by the study of the law: and conversely the knowledge of the laws of the country should be co-extensive with the moral and social relations between man and man.

The other "sine qua non" is Absolute Equality, and Certainty of Execution. So long as our laws are framed in such a way as that no man can be subject to any interference or challenge until a jury of his fellow-men have convicted or acquitted him, and in no case is the suspected required to clear himself of the charges brought against him, while the accuser is compelled, at an obvious disadvantage, to prove, not only every step and item of the wrong he suffers, but to do so at his own expense without any assistance from outside, so long shall the law of England lean rather to the guilty than the innocent, and so long shall the people of England regard the law rather as the friend of the wrong-doer than the protector of the innocent.

Thus, to return to our earlier proposition, we may safely say that if it is true that a nation in the long run obtains the laws which it deserves, Englishmen are reduced to this dilemma, that they are either the most indifferent and dull-witted people that the world ever saw, since as a body they profess to be satisfied with the existing state of things or, at any rate, to despair of a better; while the second alternative would seem to be that we are willing to endure this anomalous and uncertain condition of the law and detection of crime because each one of us is more willing to secure safety for himself in the hour of need than truly desirous of purging the community of its objectionable contents.

Nor does the evil stop here. For as the proverb tells us that a nation in effect is the master of its own destinies, from an observation of the evils of uncertain law and the fatal divorce between society and law—I believe that there is no more ruinous tendency and one more sure to bring about the downfall of public spirit and public morality, as its immediate and necessary consequences. For let it never be forgotten that every nation being composed of individuals, no nation can hope to be better nor can its aspirations rise higher than those of the majority of its contents. It is thus only by each in his measure striving to obtain the highest measure of justice and security, in so far as it is compatible with the happiness of the greatest number, that a free nation can work out its destiny and follow the path in its allotted orbit to progress and civilisation.

Let us bear in mind that among all nations, however high their

resolve and lofty their spirit when thirsting to be free, no sooner has the stimulus of slavery or other depressing cause passed away than luxury creeps in, and the love of liberty and high sentiments and noble aims give way to that love of comfort and well-being which, alas! we in England hold above all most dear. And as the nations of old have passed away after having attained the highest rank in material wealth and power, so surely, if history can be trusted, unless we mend our ways and seek the noblest national aims by the noblest paths, we shall pass away like Babylon and Jerusalem, Nineveh and Memphis, leaving no trace behind.

We are told (by the lawyers, of course) that more judges are wanted; that the courts are blocked and that the public suffer grievously therefrom. Quite true. There is no end to John Bull's suffering at the hands of the lawyers—but not from the need of more, but of less Law and lawyers. Laws and lawyers and judges have to be multiplied—because there is no certainty, uniformity, or principle in our laws. Therefore suitors constantly resort to law in England, to try their luck, or to find out "what the law is" on this or that matter. Hence scores of useless lawsuits, and of still more futile appeals. To give examples—there is no law better founded—i.e. if any English law can properly be said to be founded at all—than that the life tenant of a settled estate may not fell the timber which serves to shelter or adorn the park, grounds, or mansion without the consent of his heir—yet, lately, when I had occasion to restrain a female relative who had been ignorantly advised by a designing pettifogger to infringe this well-known rule—I discovered that Chancery could only interfere in my favour for such a period as would enable us to fight the matter out in the courts—as it subsequently was, to the great content and gain of the lawyers and the loss of many thousands to ourselves—during the following two or three years, until I was able to extort a reluctant decision in my favour to what was regarded by all parties as a foregone conclusion.

Probably no law is better known, or oftener acted upon, than the duty of the public authority to warn the owners of trees overhanging highways to lop those which may endanger wayfarers, and in cases of neglect to cause them to be lopped at the expense

of the owner. Yet only a few months ago a Brompton magistrate distinguished himself by holding the owner of a garden overlooking an out-of-the way lane in Kensington to be answerable for a serious mishap to the conductor of a public omnibus passing that way during a temporary blockade of the ordinary route, who had been unfortunately pushed down the stairs backwards by a small projecting branch and seriously injured. It was admitted that no omnibus ever plied along that lane, that the owner had received no notice or warning to lop his trees to an exceptional height, that the offending branch was no thicker than a man's finger and situate 14 feet above the roadway—thus allowing ample room for all but tall men walking about upon omnibuses. Nevertheless, as nothing but a costly series of appeals would have availed to apportion the blame and put the resulting cost upon the right shoulders—and the sufferer being advised, as usual, to rest content with his first loss—the decision went the round of the papers—as a nine days' wonder of British jurisprudence—and—"ut mos est inter Britannos"—the lawyers were enabled thenceforth to begin all over again, as if no such rule had ever existed.

It is perhaps "flogging a dead horse" to cite further cases, but if further proofs were needed to show that it is not more judges but better laws that are required, I would point to a recent case, where a local Solomon having mulcted heavily the owner of an inconsiderate hen who, after the manner of her sex and kind, had crossed the road with so little judgment that she had feloniously damaged and overthrown one of the king's subjects, riding peaceably by upon his bicycle. Common sense and common justice would have set down such an accident to the inevitable results of the modern craze for rapid travelling—according to the good old maxim of taking the thin with the fat. But it is a notable feature of our up-to-date Solomon—who like unto the Scriptural ass, being overfed (and overpaid) waxing fat doth kick—that they are nothing if not original. If they are not funny or, at any rate, try to be—and merely mind their business—no man regardeth them—not even the *Daily Mail*. And so frivolous a folk are we, that not to merit the honour of a "par" in a silly newspaper for saying a silly thing, is almost like being worth nothing at all. Moreover, he who is not con-

stantly kept before the public, by cash down or otherwise, gets no promotion in an age where government follows, rather than guides, the greater number of fools who form public opinion; therefore, no puffs, no places, Q.E.D.

I have dwelt at some length upon the moral shortcomings of British barristers and if I have overlooked their financial "peculiarities," it certainly need not be from want of proofs or examples, but rather because their sense of honesty, having been usually nipped in the bud at an early stage of their existence, by the time they have reached "silk," they have long since shuffled off any qualms about fleecing their employers, which they may have originally possessed. Their method—I had almost said their principle!—is common to all footpads licensed or unlicensed in all parts of the world—they ask for all they think they can get, and never under any circumstances refund.

As their chief study is to avoid doing any work for their pay—they naturally insist on being paid in advance, trusting to their luck or ingenuity to devise means to escape fulfilling their obligations; and the better to render the latter achievement impossible they never stick at taking fees for work which they cannot perform and—when popular—undertaking ten times more "cases" than they can possibly find time to master or conduct. If the luckless suitor, at the last, is disappointed by his leading counsel being engaged in another "case"—it cannot but be gratifying to him as an amiable Christian to reflect that the loss, if any, will assuredly not fall upon his defaulting Counsel!

For whatever else he may do—and his tricks upon his clients are more varied than those of any of our Simian progenitor—no British barrister has ever been known to show himself unworthy of the "best and highest traditions of the English bar" by refunding money which he has *failed* to earn!

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRESS

FROM Law to Press, its most obliging handmaid, is but a step. Unmindful of the obvious fact that newspapers are conducted precisely on the same lines as groceries or eating-houses, whose managers purvey the stuff that suits their customers best and can be produced at the lowest cost, do we not one and all ascribe some, if not superhuman, at any rate extrahuman, attributes, to that magnificent abstraction which we call the Press? Or is it the echo of our childish days when our earliest wandering thoughts were set upon the dismal pages of our Prayer Book or Bible, and we were told that each surprising tale in turn that harrowed or amazed our simple minds were one and all, not fabled tale or nursery lore, but truths that must be learned and made to sink into our brain, and which, however little understood, made up the basis of our childish faith? Is there no subtle connection between our infant tasks and the enforced belief which we were compelled to attach to these early lessons? Do they not serve to erect printed matter upon a pedestal which never fades while memory holds sway? Which of us does not in his heart of hearts, in spite of a thousand warnings and disappointments, still cling to the words of the Press as those of the Law and the Prophets, and trembles to profanely scoff at what he reads in daily paper or shilling novel? Nor is there anything strange in this when one reflects that the enormous power exerted by religion over men proceeds chiefly from the habits and associations of childhood.

It would take us too far beyond the limits assigned to this inquiry were we to consider how, if at all, humanity has been benefited by the art of printing. That it has placed reading within the reach of more than heretofore cannot be doubted; but is this not surely a most debatable advantage? Like the "Glorious Reformation," whose chief outward sign in our distracted realm was to cover the country with paupers and sow



the land with novel sects, the art of printing and the corresponding diffusion of knowledge, while it has certainly multiplied good books, has clearly in corresponding ratio quintupled, nay, centupled, what may be called the Antidotes of Knowledge. It has certainly increased the total production of books, but since it has not increased the qualities of human beings or diminished the percentage of fools, the obvious result is that for every learned, wise or useful book ten thousand bad and foolish ones are thrust upon the unhappy community.

When philanthropists or stump orators descant upon the blessings of progress and civilisation, they invariably follow in the sheep-like track of praising the Press which places the newspaper in the hands of every working man, and prate about the advantage of obtaining for a penny or a halfpenny what their remote ancestors could not by any possibility have obtained for a guinea.

This thoughtless cant is so familiar to our ears that we receive it as a matter of course, and scarce take the trouble of reflecting if it is a gospel truth or a blatant denial of facts. But let us never forget, each one of us according to his means and power, to raise our voice against what we know to be false. Nor let us forget that nations are marred or made by the individuals which they contain. Bad laws and a villainous Press go far to mar the noblest nation, but woe to him who lifts not his voice against their ravages. For, strange to say, it is precisely those things that are oftener said and most often repeated by foolish people on foolish occasions, perhaps because they are so often seen in print when taken down by the omnipresent reporter, that come to have a kind of sanctity, and disarm criticism more effectually than even the Bible itself.

No saying is so frequently repeated than this, that cheap newspapers are the highest blessing and privilege of humanity. Let us for a moment consider what this means. Starting from the point that every human being if rational and virtuous must desire to contribute to the happiness and well-being of all his fellow-men, how can it possibly contribute to the happiness of the greater number of our fellow-citizens to spend a certain number of hours or minutes of the day in reading a newspaper in which error and ignorance, facts and fiction, folly and sense,

are carelessly mixed in the proportion which some hurried and irresponsible quill-drivers believe will best tickle the public palate? Besides, learning by itself is not a panacea. It does not necessarily contribute to the health or happiness of the individual who gains it; while even truth and useful knowledge if diluted by as little as ten per cent. of falsehood, is surely worse than no knowledge at all. Again, is it not self-evident that all youths are not fitted alike for study, or to compete by dint of learning in the spheres of invention, science and philosophy; and even if they could, would it be desirable either for themselves or humanity at large? The very constitution of man, his health, every function of his body calls out aloud that he is made for work, manual, physical work, without which his heart, mind and brain both suffer and become diseased, and happiness and contentment—that still more sure index of real happiness—quickly depart with waning health and a failing body. What is the result, then, of this so-called blessing of universal education? It usually serves but to destroy the natural balance, and upset the nice mechanism set out for man through the operation of natural gravitation and of physiological laws—forcibly dragging men and women away from their natural sphere to where their inapt or stunted mental powers are wasted through years of anxious toil and irksome confinement—in order to gain an end, which in 50 cases to one is never reached at all; whereas nature and inclination alike would have procured more satisfactory results to body and mind by spending those hours of childhood in healthy employment and patient observation, acquiring little by little that intimate acquaintance with the treasures of Nature and the secrets that are bound up in her womb, which are vouchsafed alone to those who live a rustic life of peaceful toil. Hence what is the stiffest modern problem that we have to deal with? What is it that denudes the country of our best blood, and fills the slums with useless hands? It is the Education which helps and stimulates our youth to devour the exciting pages of the pernicious trash which floods the modern bookstall, and whose effect consists in unsettling them and unfitting them for the work that falls to their hand, and divorces them fatally from the land upon which their fathers earned their bread. Alas! shall we ever attempt to retrieve our

error, or shall we ever look facts in the face? When we become a sickly nation of shabby clerks and frivolous typewriters with none left to till the land we shall be on the brink of what now can but be seen on the horizon, but which is plain enough, at any rate in the Transvaal at the present hour: a splendid climate, a fruitful land, a strong and active native population; yet so refined have we become that instead of earning the fruits of the earth, we can only pay with gold the Chinamen or Kaffirs to feed us withal, until sunk in luxury and loathing toil and labour we shall become unwilling or unable to defend ourselves like the over-refined nations of antiquity, until the tide of Chinese, Kaffirs or Japanese will sweep over us, and our story will be that of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Romans of the fateful past.

But are we not to seek after refinement? To that I answer, No, ten thousand times no! Let us not forget that we are a conquering race like the Romans of old, who, rising out of nothing by sheer strength of will, and arm, and fibre, have subjected weaker and more refined races, and built up an Empire which must be held, as it has been won, by the sword.

Refinement is for the Greeks and Italians and other such nations, and as Greece fell through its refinement and became the slave and mistress of Rome and the minister of her pleasure, so, too, the French, the modern exponents of Attic Refinement, Wit, and Taste, whose teachers, jaded with subtlety and satiety, have cast aside and used up in turn all the resources of religion, philosophy, faith, and hope, restlessly turning hither and thither for new pleasures, new sensations, and new gods, are destined themselves to be ground in God's good time under the heel of a revolting democracy.

At first sight it would seem almost inexplicable that rough-and-ready nations, like England and America, to whom culture and refinement are but meaningless exotics and empty words, should turn out more books and newspapers per head than any people in the world. But funnier still it is to hear the thoughtless amongst us deduce from that our superiority to other nations who are satisfied with smaller newspapers and less print for the money. How many times have I heard with undisguised pride the Western American, in the congeries of shingle-built monstrosities,

which, if you only go far enough West, is invariably called a City, say, "Why, sir, in this h'yar city I cal'ate there ain't a single shanty that don't get his daily paper every morning. There are more papers in the state of New York than are published in the whole darned Republic of France. And just see what you get for your money. Why, there's more printing in one of our 5 cent papers than there is in a 10 cent French, German, or Italian newspaper, to say nothing of an extra sheet for advertisements."

The explanation, however, is perfectly simple. Whether it is education, or religion, or philanthropy, if it is worked by an Anglo-Saxon, it is infallibly worked on business lines; that is, in plain English, whatever the profession or flag under which it is "run," the aim is always the same. In the words of a Yankee editor, "If it don't pay, it won't go down; and if it don't go down, it won't pay." The universal test is the almighty dollar; and though oddly enough we twit our American cousins with a weakness which is so apparent as even to grate upon our own accustomed ears and eyes, our only superiority in the matter lies in our greater antiquity, which enables us to gain greater practice in the art of concealing what we all know exists, and loudly denying in public what we universally admit in private; or to put it in other words, by long experience we have learned so cunningly to wrap up our hypocrisy, that not only it does not grate upon our conscience, but we have come to flatter ourselves that it defies the closest scrutiny of our neighbours.

When properly considered, the secret of the many newspapers that infest our land, and of their superiority in point of size and weight when compared with our continental neighbours, is merely the sign of our commercial spirit. Here, as everywhere, hypocrisy is the breath of our life as it is to the life of everything that goes to make it up. The overwhelming majority of our newspapers are neither run for the instruction of youth, nor the consolation of old age, nor yet for imparting useful information, nor disseminating useful knowledge. Their main prop is advertisement. Advertisement for cash down, advertisement, like gratitude for favours to come, advertisement of opinions, philosophies, mining adventures, or anything under the sun, however false and unacceptable, that promises a cash profit;

advertisement of the newspaper proprietor, or his friends and relations, or the sect to which he belongs (if the sect pays enough for it, or if it promises a fair return); in short, the modern newspaper consists of, as anybody can see for himself by investing a penny in the *Daily Tellalie*, a farthing's-worth of news and three farthings'-worth of advertisement. In order to realize what this is, what should we think of our host if he were to ask us to his party and placard our backs with "Try Horniman's pure tea," or "Pears' soap is matchless for the complexion," etc.? Must we not be a stupid nation to endure such barefaced impudence on this outrageous scale?

I am informed that a shilling a day is paid to the shadiest of outcasts for carrying a light placard setting forth the merits of the latest drama, or the last invented soap; yet while there is not a free and independent Briton in the realm who would not account it a disgrace to pace Piccadilly with a sandwich board, it needs but the honoured and respected tongue of the Press to convince him that his lot is one that should be envied above all nations of the earth, since for the sum of a penny, aye, and even half a penny, he is admitted to the exalted privilege of playing the part of a sandwich man by carrying about three or four sheets of finely printed advertisements along with his daily paper.

I never return from abroad without an inward sense of revolt at the involuntary post of a walking advertisement thus unwillingly assumed, when in exchange for the smallest coin of the realm a large bundle of advertisements is thrust into my unwilling hand; nor can I reconcile this humble assumption of an ungrateful office with what I conceive to be the just limits of British philanthropy, and am therefore reduced to the painful conclusion that my fellow-countrymen as a body are lured by the syren's tongue to play the vulgar, if necessary, part of walking advertisement-mongers, from sheer credulity not unmingled with stupidity. But if it seems in the light of these remarks not doubtful, but almost certain, that the aim and end of the penny paper in England and America is not, as we are apt to say on grand occasions, to instruct or amuse, or even to beguile a passing hour, but rather to "push" antibilious pills, or set forth the transcendent merits of a lung tonic, what shall we say of the

ephemeral publications which, pressing eagerly one upon the other, "like shadows come and so depart"? When we cast our eyes upon the modern book-stall and wearily scan the pages of each illustrated paper or magazine in turn with their inevitable Inaugurations, Royal Visits, Accidents, and still more senseless "Snapshots of Celebrities," whose inane portraits are prepaid by the aforesaid celebrities, usually in cash—one trembles for the future of our race.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AMERICAN JOURNALISM

To every true lover of this country the recent Yankee invasion of Society, Press, Literature, Language and Politics, and the rise and progress of the Jews into the realms of Press, Literature, Art, and Society are phenomena of painful interest.

Somebody has said "That absence makes the heart grow fonder." However this may be, there can be no doubt that the Englishman who has been long away from his country not only yearns for the flesh-pots of Egypt (which may be freely translated into the greasy chop and stale bun which greet him with unvarying fidelity in whatever port he lands), but the changes, which to stay-at-home folk are imperceptible, at once become to him a subject of notice and surprise.

In the physical order it is well understood that organisms which are fitted for survival are provided with an impermeability of texture which protects them from external invasion; so, too, in the inorganic world, objects which are easily penetrable by water or air, being laid open to the destructive influence of that fluid are speedily broken up and decay. As a familiar instance, every one has noticed that bread, for example, or paper thrown into water will quickly lose its nature, becoming absorbed in the element in which it is placed. The hardest oak which will resist weather and water for hundreds of years, if decay has once set in by the absence of healthy coherence through disease, becomes a mere pulp without strength or powers of resistance.

Can it be that England, like a rotten pear, is ready to fall from the branch, or like a good-natured old grandmother bordering on dotage, filled with a weakly and irrational tenderness towards the grandchildren who cluster about her knee, sinks her self-respect in the love of her offspring, overflowing with senile admiration at their infantine prattle? Nor does the mischief end here. For while Britannia dotes over her Colonial babes, what more surely follows than that the objects of her admiration, taking advantage of her weakness, should merge their filial

respect into pity not unmingled with disdain? Alas! for poor old England! To listen to her stay-at-home mouthpieces one would suppose that our Colonies and trans-Atlantic cousins were ever burning with a perennial glow of gratitude and affection towards the land that gave them birth. Poor silly old grandmother! Could she but see herself as others see her! Could she but don Fortunatus' cap and visit the hearths and homes of Greater Britain! How like the fond and doting grandmother was the drivel of the Press over her beloved Colonials whose martial sons rallied gallantly about her like true "chips of the old block," ready to go through fire and water for 5/- a day! Poor old Britannia! "Quantum mutata ab illo hectore," etc. How changed from the day when she sternly denied bare justice to the Colonies of Boston and New York. What an age in a nation's life from the firm tones of middle age to the quavering notes of second childhood! It is no longer "Go, and he goeth. Do, and he doeth," but it is "Sweet Colonies, come to your old grandmother's knee. Bless your little hearts, how you did fight for us! What we should have done without you Heaven knows! You are the consolation of my declining years. Chamberlain shall come to you and give you everything you ask for, that he shall, and we'll fight away all the naughty nations that tease you, your old Granny shall take care of you and you shall not have a penny to pay, there!" etc., etc.

Whether this flabby condition be traceable to the spongy state into which we have fallen, or to a growing imbecility denoting extreme old age and premature decay, may be safely left to the fancy of my readers. None will deny the extraordinary efforts that we make of late to tickle and flatter our Colonies, to "butter up" our American cousins, or exalt their already arrogant pretensions to a level which would seem ironical were it not supported by that Universal Imitation which we are told is itself sincerest flattery.

We cannot always depend upon words expressing the sentiments of an individual or newspaper. Diplomats go so far as to say that language is given to man to conceal his thoughts. But when we see each rising politician diving into the United States as if to derive fresh inspiration for his immature efforts of statesmanship, each youthful aristocrat pervading the States in



order to provide himself with a specimen of Columbia's daughters, each politician vying with his neighbour to produce some new political slang, or worse still, the last political trick from Congress or Tammany Hall, our newspapers written in Americanese wrung from the gutter slang of Broadway, our schoolboys and school-girls lisping the last Yankee phrase and the last joke from the Yankee papers, one rubs one's eyes and wonders if Uncle Sam or Britannia rules the roost. Again, is it helpless absorption, or is it conscious, deliberate imitation, and if so why? Can any man with a spark of patriotism seriously set himself to copy a nation, more especially in its external manifestations (and little else can reach our shores), of a people without faith except in dollars, without religion, though alas! with all too many religious varieties, who seem to think they have just been created by a special effort of the Almighty with all the latest improvements "run right up to date," whose women know neither respect, nor reserve, nor reticence, nor refinement, and whose children bid fair to be worse than their parents. Far be it from me to ignore the sterling qualities of their Western pioneers, the domesticity of their rustic homes and families, the rough outspoken if untutored manliness of their farming class, the open-handed generosity and hospitality of all alike; but unfortunately it is not the virtues of a nation that attract or excite imitation in all times and all countries, and least of all with the Briton of to-day, but the novel, the striking, the erratic, and the grotesque. For this it is which seems to delight the British-born man or woman in the United States, this is what he imports and gulps down with ever-renewing appetite. It is rather the blots on the Yankee body politic, the excrescences on the surface of a mongrel society raked from the gutters of every nation, which seems to exercise a singular fascination upon the British mind.

If nothing else, our pride should surely save us. But where is this pride that a hundred years ago (if the literature of the time be trusted) was the mark of the Briton and the theme of a thousand satires? Is it the commerce of the United States that excites our envy, that we must needs imitate the latest Yankee trick for turning wooden nutmegs, selling clocks without works, or inventing new systems for defrauding wholesale as well as retail through engines most inaptly termed Trusts? Or is it their

municipal conduct of affairs and their wholesale combinations for robbery, or their politics, which win our favour, and invite us to imitate their log-rolling and their Caucuses, their dummy candidates, their political "bosses," and their corrupt "Rings!" Or is it their Wall Street with its mushroom speculators, the idols of the street to-day, grovelling in the gutter to-morrow, their bogus telegrams, their false news, and their perennial "smartness"? Do we seriously desire to see old England reduced to the political condition of the United States, where every honest man shrinks from participation in the work of Justice or Legislation, standing aloof from the Commonwealth and the grovelling herd that fight like jackals for the national revenues, while they stand by in silence, or if, perchance, they have "made their pile," go spend their wealth in foreign lands and mate their daughters to foreign counts or English peers, or again, casting their country contemptuously aside, build palaces in foreign lands, where, if liberty be less, the decency of Law, Politics, and Society, offer charms unknown to them at home.

Now let us turn from the æsthetic to the concrete. Whence this amazing mania for corrupting our language with Yankee slang and Yankee turns of phrase? If Jewish gold bids fair to command the British Press, alternately with insidious skill advertising or stealthily pleading the cause of Israel and the advancement of the Jews, the almost universal invasion of the Yankee, male and female, in the lower ranks of literature and journalism coupled with a debasing greed for novelty in phrase and diction, has produced a revolution in our written language that fills every true lover of his country with humiliation, and presents one of our most serious symptoms of national decay.

For pride of race is the very salt of the nation. Let but a nation lose its faith in its future and its pride and belief in its mission and power, and make a God of luxury and material prosperity, turning to scorn its Laws and Prophets, the day of doom is not far off. Nor is it only our Press which is honey-combed like poor old England itself with cheap labour from every part of the world and overrun with wanderers without home or country, who endure exile in our land only so long as they can make a living by the pen and corrupt our language at their own sweet will! There is throughout the realms of literature a

deplorable absence of conscious organism, of any system, or point of contact between the Press and the Universities, and still less of subjection to any National or Intellectual Tribunal.

In almost all other civilized lands the leading University Boards from time to time undertake the revision of current orthography, and place under their ban such new phrases, words, or colloquies as too often merely represent the laziness or the ignorance of the writer.

It is hard to say how far the current scribbling of the Press contributes to corrupt our language, put together, as it is, as hastily and as cheaply as the slop clothing that issues from the Jewish sweater's workroom, but if we may judge by the average output of the British masculine and feminine novel or the columns of the Daily Press it would indeed seem that bad English, false sentiment, slipshod language and literary vulgarity have reached the lowest imaginable level.

Of all the many silly boasts of which the Briton is guilty in pulpit, senate, or newspaper leader, there is none so fatuous as the ludicrous pretension of the women of our time to greater culture than their predecessors of a hundred years ago. Any one who will take the trouble to go back as far as a hundred years ago and read the current sheets, magazines, and gazettes, or, again, the letters and memoirs of the ladies of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, must surely be struck with the lamentable disparity and the grievous declension of these days in eloquence and purity of style and literary skill, to say nothing of grammatical errors, vulgar Americanisms and ever-recurring slang-words, which serve to bridge the gaps of ignorance and haste. Without descending so low as the half-penny papers but mounting as high as the best magazines and such standard works as the British Encyclopædia, no one who will take the pains to compare the work of the end of the last century and the beginning of this with the work of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, can fail to be struck with the fatal results of half a century of conversational decay, slipshod thought, hurried talk and work, and the indiscriminate importation of Yankee slang and Continental speech-refuse.

It will be, no doubt, urged in defence of slang importation and

"Amurrican" that in some cases a real want is supplied and a new idea is clothed with its appropriate garb. Undoubtedly if that were the case much might be said in its defence. But the simplest consideration will soon show that, technicalities apart, to which surely none will object, there is nothing new in the realm of ideas that our language is unable to cope with, and adequately represent. Moreover, whenever a word is invented or modified in meaning, and by a careless writer twisted from its real sense, the word it replaces will as surely be maimed and destroyed. Still more where foolish imitators, whose names alas! are legion, led by a famous name or sheep-like following in the footsteps of their predecessors, aggravate the evil, this atrocious practice common to all illiterate scribblers but carried to its highest point by our trans-Atlantic neighbours, has left a searing mark on English current literature, which only sternly applied reform can extirpate. Too lazy to use words for their right purpose, or too ignorant to distinguish between pure English and the slang of the Ring and the Market, they scarcely ever make a distinction between "lie" and lay, the active and passive, the transitive and intransitive, but speak of loaning instead of lending, eventuate for occur, locate for fix, to breach for to break, while with respect to prepositions, Americans having long ago grown used to their haphazard mixture in the mouths of Germans, Irish, and other foreigners around them, invariably use the term "letting on" for "letting out" (a secret), "backing down" for "backing out," and in a general way every substantive is turned into a verb, as fancy, haste, or laziness suggests.

Here we meet another peculiarity, common to ignorance in all ages and climes, so well represented by the Roman author two thousand years ago, who tells us that in the eyes of the ignorant everything unknown is magnificent. ("Omne ignotum pro magnifico.") The simplest phrase or word picked out of a foreign vocabulary is hugged and cherished, and by many writers dragged in to supplant an English phrase, serving the double purpose of saving thought or search for an equivalent, as well as of astonishing the public with the writer's masterly acquaintance with foreign tongues.

The average reader instead of resenting this childish vanity of

the author, possibly learns and echoes it as a literary novelty of Jones or Simkins, and lo! the word is introduced for good and all, while to the like extent the good old English equivalent is ousted and supplanted by the foreigner. Thus it becomes "fashionable"—it is bandied from mouth to mouth, and stranger still, even when abandoned by the language of its birth, as for example the phrase "upon the tapis," it remains firmly fixed in the English vocabulary, though unknown in the land of its birth!

An exaggerated, if ludicrous, example of this truly British failing is the word "hinterland." One can hardly imagine a more humiliating position than to adopt from unlettered Boer farmers of the Cape a word for "backlands" which some ignorant penny-a-liner, first discovered in a German or Dutch map set out as "hinterland," and apparently attributing to it some magic spell or some unseen superiority to its British equivalent of "backland," flourished it in the eyes of his readers as a highly technical and brilliant discovery. The united wisdom of the British Press, failing, apparently, to discover that "hinter" was Dutch for "hinder," acclaimed it with enthusiasm; and to complete the comedy, the wisecracks of the Colonial Office and the Crown Surveyors entered the same upon their maps, adopted it as their official term for "backland" for ever and a day!

How widely different are the manly and patriotic views of Germans stimulated by the good sense and national pride of Kaiser Wilhelm! who, finding that Fashion before his day required every well-bred German to render his "Bill-of-Fare" into the nearest approach to French of which the language is capable at the risk of being considered vulgar and unfashionable, headed in his own Court a complete revolution of this slavish and degrading mimicry.

It is strange that the pride of nationality which used to burn so strong in the British breast should of late years have grown so weak within us that an Englishman who moves into the Colonies or comes in contact with an inferior race like the Boers and Kaffirs of South Africa, and the Maoris and Blackfellows of Australia, should glory in displacing his own more expressive tongue for a miserable jargon compounded of the language of these countries grafted upon his own.

Let it be thoroughly understood that my reproach does not extend to words for which we have no equivalent: though there, too, the Western American, be it said to his credit, even where a new word has to be sought, declines to take from an inferior and subject race words that his own vocabulary can easily supply. As an example, Captain "Mayne Reid's stories which are crammed with bits of Spanish slang and Spanish oaths and such like tomfoolery, apparently dished up to suit English taste, invariably speak of 'lassoing' instead of 'noosing' (which is the exact and accurate English equivalent and one always used by the genuine cowboy or westerner), with the result that the word 'lasso' is introduced and fixed in the English language without any conceivable excuse or reason unless indeed to satisfy the British appetite for exotic words to which John Bull persistently ascribes a peculiar beauty and merit which he refuses to his own." "Omne ignotum pro magnifico"—verily and indeed!

In the matter of linguistic independence we see the special peculiarities of our trans-Atlantic neighbours well displayed. Whether it is, as has been suggested by some, that the Colonial hatred of the British yoke has produced the extraordinary divergence which exists between our names for familiar things and those of our erstwhile Colonists, or not, the immediate cause is not far to seek. Wherever the divergence occurs it is nearly always due to the current English of the day, or else the dialect of the Province or County from which the Colonists sprang, or sometimes an obsolete word which was current English when the State was first colonized. As for example, "fishpole" for "fishing-rod," or "snaking along" for "sliding," "creeks" for "streams," "gunning" for "shooting," etc., etc.

In other lands either pride or good sense goes far to counteract this childish tendency through the influence of an intelligent and cultivated Press: but unfortunately for our ill-used language modern Pressmen vie with each other in grubbing out of the mud some new current slang phrase or senseless foreign word with which to interlard and enliven their columns. And just as the silly fresh-landed "new chum" of Australia glories in speaking of a "mob" of cattle, and calls a festive gathering a "corobery," the globe-trotter who has run up to Kobe and back speaks of Japanese girls as "mus'més," an hotel as his "yadoya," and

his handcart as "a jennyrickshaw," or, scarce six months landed at the Cape, displays his superior wisdom to the astonishment of the new-comer by calling a stone a "clip," a pond a "vley," a ravine a "kloof," a track a "spoor," and scorns to speak of a forest in any other terms but a "bush!"

Apart from the ignominy of introducing equivalents drawn from inferior tongues for objects of the commonest kind, which cannot but degrade and impoverish our own language, must it not lower us in the foreigner's eyes to find the countrymen of what he supposes to be a civilized land accepting and substituting in their own ordinary conversation his own words for common objects!

If corruption of our language is a matter of unconcern to the gentlemen of the Press, what are we to say to the corruption of the innocent and the virtuous, to which they are equally indifferent if we may judge by the villainous literature which is produced by the cartload in the United States and England and which is, through the misfortune of a free and cheap Press, brought at the lowest conceivable price to the very door of the cottage and the reach of every child in the realm. When we consider the far-reaching power of evil possessed by the Press, and the illimitable harm wrought through its agency one is inclined to doubt if its boasted advantages outweigh its evil effects. It would be vain to enumerate the temptation that is given to the half-taught, underfed children of the lower classes, especially those who spring from families where no high or noble thought or any idea beyond the sordid exigencies of a miserable life compel attention to the æsthetic or spiritual side of existence, who, half-starved for the most part and induced by an overpowering instinct to search the streets for garbage in lieu of food, from which it is but a short step to begin by plundering children smaller and weaker than themselves, are led on step by step, till the animal instinct being fully aroused, they are ripe for a criminal life. Given to such as these, the abominations that disgrace our cheaper book-shops and the libraries of our slums, and perhaps in a more dangerous degree the sensational tales of crime and adventure graphically represented upon the inferior theatres of the entire kingdom, the more attractive because more graphically displayed and surrounded by the thrilling accompaniments of dress, scenery and

action, what agent can truly be said to contribute more directly to the ruin of the nation than the cheap Press? Nor need we go as low as this to trace the fatal effects of the alluring tales of criminals and exciting if impossible hair-breadth escapes of imaginary heroes, who revel in bloodshed and slaughter. It should not be forgotten that just as the embryo of the highest types frequently display the characteristics of the lowest type of the same family, so, too, the human child in the centres of civilization exhibits from birth the tendencies of its savage forefathers, the cave-dwellers, who fought for bare existence with tooth and nail, or, armed with rude sticks and later with weapons of flint, painfully struggled to support life against the hyenas and cave-bears of the prehistoric period. Even in the highest classes, among the most cultivated races, the male child in his earliest manifestations of activity tears flies and birds to pieces, while his earliest actions display a passion for bloodshed and destruction, passing on from torture of inferior animals to the destruction of game, which, if not corrected by education or diverted into the channels of sport and athletic exercises, too surely degenerates into blood-thirsty brutality, and proclaims the victory of the beast over the man.

Nor are these idle fancies, or theories of philosophic conjecture. The stern hard facts of the police court and jail too clearly show that no more fruitful and direct allurements to the paths of crime and vice can be found than the penny novelette of the "criminal" and "detective" class, which flood the kingdom from one end to the other. It is no exaggeration to say that there is scarcely a boy criminal who is not found with these hideous publications in his pocket, or to whom habitual indulgence in such literature is not regularly imputed.

But if our penny novelettes, and, speaking generally, the intellectual food that is offered to the parched brains and knowledge-seeking minds of the half-awakened youth of the Democracy are entirely bad, and tend usually to inflammation of the passions, excitement of the brain, and general deterioration of the entire human structure, what must we say to the foulness that parades itself in picture, print, newspaper and gazette throughout the continent of America, where police restrictions are less exacting than in our own land ?



It will hardly be believed that I have myself bought in the United States, under the wrappers and titles of harmless classical stories, such books as no decent or civilized person could peruse without horror, nor the police of any civilized country admit. It is difficult to conceive the motives of such diabolical strategies for the corruption of youth, unless it is that by diffusing the subtle poison of a passion for such intellectual garbage, their circulation is increased and the area of demand is enlarged for a kind of literature which can be produced in enormous quantities by the meanest and coarsest intellects.

All honour to the English Legislature that, in this particular, they stand alone and above every Christian land. Would that the same good intentions could, by any possibility, be ascribed to the purveyors of the newspapers, magazines, popular plays and novels, which are poured out over the land like some vast river of pollution, to which the deluge of Holy Writ can alone aptly be compared, since only those who take refuge in the ark of Morality and Religion can emerge from the raging flood unscathed.

No doubt it will be urged that the Press do a great work in checking men's evil courses by exposing to the full glare of publicity their secret as well as public actions and holding them up to public execration. Such is the public theory in their defence. Now let us look at it in fact and practice. Keeping well in mind the fact, the undoubted principle, that books, plays and newspapers and all that comes from the Press are produced and governed precisely by the same laws as any other commodity, the police laws restraining the public sale of the more infamous, and the public want of taste restraining the production of the better class of literature, it is manifest that those who push their sale and stimulate their production are governed by the ordinary rules of demand and supply precisely like any other trade, with this remarkable difference, that they alone possess of all trades the enormous moral responsibility of leading the youth of the country into better or worse ways, thought and morality, according as the output of the Press is more or less vicious and corrupt.

Now, since it is clear that a higher intellect is required for the production of superior than inferior work, it follows, as an abso-

lute certainty, that the tendency, where enormous production is the rule, is infallibly on the down grade; that is, that the bulk of literary output will most certainly be inferior in tone, quality and morality. Again, the law of Libel which I have before characterised as the Palladium of the rogue, under whose protection the rogue who knows the law can pick his way as safely, indeed more safely than any honest man, through the shoals and breakers of the legal archipelago, and, as a crowning climax, can meet his victim's accusations with a smiling face, invoking the law itself to justify his villainies—the law of Libel stands always right in the way of the critic and reformer. How, then, shall we expect improvement until the law itself is reformed and brought into line with the foreign jurisprudence where technical libels are distinguished from real, and the spirit is set before the letter: in short, until real libels, punishable in other lands with imprisonment, present terrors for the guilty alone. In the greater number of cases the Press is debarred from any effective exposure of the myriads of conspiracies against purse and person which they know to exist, which are revealed in their daily issues, and out of which they, themselves, make a conscious and deliberate harvest through innumerable advertisements, for even if they were inclined to cut their own throats by drying up the roots of their own prosperity for the furtherance of public morality, they would have to run the gauntlet of countless prosecutions. If any doubt exists upon this point, we have only to call to mind the legal persecution suffered by that admirable newspaper, *Truth*, which set itself deliberately the task of detection and exposure of roguery, fraud and organised swindling, together with the more monstrous inequalities of what we please to call Justice in this country; or to recall the universal howl of execration and the condemnation to the severest penalty of Joseph Stead, who, by his publication of the "Victims of Babylon," literally offered himself up as a holocaust to the law, and by suffering grave legal persecution for justice's sake, procured the amendment of the law affecting women by his effective exposure of crime in high places. Let us not forget that the efforts of the Press in this direction have been so few and far between that they can safely be ascribed to that exception which is said to prove the rule, while on the other hand

there does not seem a tittle or jot of truth in the widespread assertion which is made in defence of the inferior quality of their productions, that the public in drama, literature and art, prefer the low and abject and grovelling to the lofty, the sublime, the moral and the spiritual. One more remaining claim has been put forward by the Press on their behalf, which is, that all human action being prone to evil, and all human administration, police and law, being in the hands of human instruments and carried out by fallible human agency, an impartial and almost irresponsible universal agent is desirable, who, like the "little cherub who sits up aloft," or the chorus of a Greek play, is supposed to watch over human interests from its Olympian height, and, guided by pure virtue and unalloyed altruism, records in unimpassioned tones the tale of human vanities. Beautiful, if true! Touching indeed, but wholly chimerical! Alas! the British Press, like the rag-picker, is all too prone to probe its dirty fingers into every nook and cranny into which the basest curiosity would peer, or out of which money can possibly be made! War, bloodshed and crime it dilates upon, yet not in the interests of human wrongs or for the redress of human rights, but, I fear greatly, in order to stimulate the basest human passions, to satisfy the meanest cravings of human inquisitiveness, and pierce the most degrading secrets of the human soul.

And those whose touching confidence in the civilizing influence of the Press has not been destroyed by the contact of actual experience, we must remind, that while it is an undoubted fact that its far-reaching power would, if exerted in the right direction, be of enormous service to encourage the more even distribution of justice, to curb the fantastic tricks of judges, expose the asinine freaks of juries, and restrain the party-begotten acts of ministerial folly, instead of all this, we find, in fact, that the Press is ever selling its services to the highest bidder, and while it poses as the defender, is too often the abettor, and the paid advocate of the crimes which it professes to abhor.

To those who have accompanied me thus far it may seem as if a strong anti-American bias animated my remarks. It does not, however, follow that my strictures against the pertinacious adoption of American and Colonial idioms are meant to

confer any slur upon those estimable communities. My complaint rather lies with our own want of pride, which would stoop so low as to gather up the rough-and-ready phrases and untutored talk which, while natural and even commendable in young and struggling communities, as in the amusing, if imperfect, speech of childhood, is most pitiable and undesirable when adopted into the more matured speech of the Mother-country.

Granted that pride of race, love of country, earnestness of purpose, and an abiding sense of duty owing to one's fatherland, are the four marks of a vigorous and masterful nation, it is painful to watch as years roll by the steady decline of these four qualities in our fellow-countrymen. The Japanese have lately displayed to the world these characteristics of an imperious race in so startling a degree as to fill the minds of European nations with amazement, and admiration not unmingled with fear, lest powers so exceptional should be ultimately turned against the nations who taught them the material arts for which in these late years they have exhibited such surprising proficiency.

## CHAPTER XV

### OUR MORAL SLAVERY

IF we believe the teachings of the past, the marked change which has come over Englishmen in the last forty years, during which our ideals as well as our practices have departed widely from those of earlier days, coinciding as they do ominously with the signs which have accompanied the decline of nations that have risen and fallen into decay, must fill us with apprehension for our own. It is true that some nations enjoy the privilege of a re-birth. France has been generally credited with having risen from the lowest depths of national degradation through the fiery furnace of disaster and carnage, like a Phoenix from its ashes, where other nations have sunk to rise no more. But, at least, the great Bourgeoisie was as yet untainted; and, by climbing to power over the bodies of an effete aristocracy, they painfully attempted the moral regeneration of their country.

Let us glance at the causes assigned by history to the fall of nations:—In ancient Babylon, overwhelming success in commerce; in Persia, overwhelming success in arms, enervating luxury and debasing despotism; in Macedon and the Greek Colonies, pride of conquest; in Old Rome, as in Modern Spain, the accumulation of colossal fortunes, Surfeit of conquest, and Slavery, Wasteful prodigality, and Enervating luxury. Slavery by name we certainly abolished in 1840: but is it so certain we should be in the mood to repeat that heroic sacrifice now were the occasion to recur again? It may fairly be doubted. For since that epoch, we have passed from generous youth to cynical old age, when we eagerly hug our Creature Comforts—and think all else a delusion and a sham. Yes—Slavery by *name* and *title* indeed is gone from us! But what, then, is the aim of the industrial and financial Millionaires of England and the United States, but to make slaves of their fellow-countrymen and reduce them to the position of their humble tributaries, as surely as ever the Assyrians

of old made captives to their bow and spear! I will go further: such is our degradation—if the Press does not greatly mistake our ideals—that we are bidden in the newspapers to fall down and worship them day by day. To be sure, slavery of the body we have no more among us. It is slavery of the senses, of the will, of the mind, which now holds sway. Nor is it only that we glory in the Practice of Slavery, but, what is far worse, we worship the Ideal. Let us look around us and calmly survey the trend of common habit and common talk, the turgid declamations of the council chamber or the tribunals, the deliverances of judges, or the gossip of the market-place and the Exchange, the presentment of public opinion in the myriad rags which flaunt their vicious sentiments in the public eye, the theatres and music-halls that nightly compass degradation by thought, word, and deed; shall it be said that all such run counter to public feeling, public sentiment, and public taste? or does it not proclaim a universal worship of moral and intellectual slavery worse than any that has debased Old Babylon or Pagan Rome?

But I shall be told, “Where is the justice of the comparison between these heathen cities and those of our days? Are we not Christians, and as far removed from heathendom as heaven from hell? Then why attempt to form a parallel? Aye, Christians in name we are indeed: but as far removed from the practice or theory of Christian life as ever was Roman centurion or Mongol khan. As we have our churches to Christ, so had the centurion in old Rome along with the countless gods of every land, with each their servitors and temples to choose from. But herein lies the difference. He did not choose to give up the world, the flesh, and the devil, and cleave to the banner of Christ: while we, far worse than he—who knew not the truth as we do—choosing not to imitate Christ’s life and precepts, use His standard but to cloak our iniquities.

Nor is it only in straightforwardness that we lag behind the heathens of old Rome, whom we affect to despise for their cruelty and idolatrous practices, while we confessedly learn from them true nobility of character, loftiness of views, steadfastness of purpose, and purity of patriotism. Is it not

a terrible and a shameful reflection to think that after near 2,000 years of openly avowed Christianity, our religion and our morality is but little better than those of the Ancients, while in all that goes to constitute perfect manhood we are immeasurably their inferiors? Nay, do we not even now recall their noble lives to stimulate our youth, their illustrious examples to spur us to higher planes of effort, their lofty acts of self-sacrifice to quicken our own jaded patriotism? If we describe an heroic act, must we not fly to comparisons drawn from classic story? If a lofty sentiment demands expression, do we not insensibly adopt the language of ancient Greece or Rome? In what, then, are we their equals, much less their superiors, except it be in the profession, but not the practice, of a Christianity which they have never known? Do we achieve a great building, erect a great monument, or span an estuary with a noble bridge, we measure its success by its close resemblance to the great models of the past. Or if one of us has far outstripped his fellows in poem, tragedy, or prose, do we not dub it a classic, which means that we range it among the great intellectual triumphs of ancient Greece or Rome? And yet we never cease to boast, and talk forsooth of our MODERN CIVILISATION as if the triumphs of Vulcan in forge and factory, our mechanical novelties, our power-looms, our factories, and the other adjuncts of our dingy life, ministering alone to luxury, comfort, and the indulgence of the senses, were the be-all and end-all of human effort!

Sad as is the tale, nothing is more certain than that our ingrained habit (above all in this England of ours) of repeating hackneyed phrases till we come to think they are as true and unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians, has so corrupted our public opinion, that few indeed there are who realise that what we please to call our civilisation is but a gross service of sensuality which for the most part links us by a degrading chain to a slavery more debasing than any we have abolished by law.

For what is plainer to every thinking mind than that every step which multiplies our creature comforts and enlarges our list of wants—till the luxury of to-day becomes the necessity of to-morrow—only serves to forge another link to fetter our indepen-

dence, and by attaching us yet more to trivial and unnecessary comforts, by so much docks our manhood and abridges our liberty. Further it follows by inexorable logic that the man who possesses most luxuries, most sensual aids, and is surrounded by most help, is necessarily the most helpless when deprived of these adjuncts; and though he be ten times over a millionaire and consequently exalted to the highest pinnacle of popular estimation by the brazen tongue of a lying Press—he is nevertheless the most helpless slave of a slavish civilisation.

But my critics will reply, "Have we no heroes still among us? Are there never instances of acts of devotion, acts of self-abnegation, and acts of supreme self-sacrifice for king or country which may be placed in the ranks of the doings of the Ancients and as worthy of immortality as they? Most assuredly there are. "As hope springs eternal in the human breast," so Nature plants in all young hearts the generous spirit of self-sacrifice, which is the germ from which all great deeds spring. But if such there be they will not be because of, but in spite of, our modern civilisation. It is not the acts themselves but the manner with which they are regarded that is deplorable. For instance, take the gallant miner who descends into the pit mouth in spite of his fellows' remonstrance to snatch a brother miner from a terrible death at the risk of his own life. A few lines in a provincial paper may record the act just to fill up an empty space, and possibly, if news be scarce, the gallant deed may be recorded in a London paper. Some may read it, for want of thought or want of better pastime: but let a cricketer of note achieve a hundred runs or a footballer of distinction give victory to his team by a successful goal, or a foreign Prince land upon our shores, though his sole distinction may be the possession of a German name of seven syllables and his title to Fame being born an Archduke!—Observe the difference! To which will the highest fame be accorded, and on which of the two will the public interest centre? Or again which event is it which excites most attention and causes most talk? If they appeared in the flesh in theatre, or hall, or public park, which of them would claim the admiration of the public—the cricketer, the eminent footballer, the last imported giant, or the heroic miner?

Most true it is that great deeds are done. Many still "do good



by stealth and blush to find it fame." There will ever be in the present, as in the past, great natures which rise above the common order and break through all rules. But must it not be fatal to great lives, great deeds, great enterprises, and heroic virtues, to feel and know that heroism and high purposes must be hidden away rather than avowed boldly to the world—the act of impulse, rather than the steady purpose of well-ordered virtue or valour—until the recollection of a great deed has come to cause Englishmen rather to blush that they are "found out" in acts of gallantry or self-sacrifice, and to treat high and lofty sentiments as "stuff" fit only for a play or novel.

## CHAPTER XVI

### STAGE

IF, then, the condition of our Press, and a consideration of its output fairly weighed in the balance, must seem to many "more honoured in the breach than in the observance," what are we to say to the Stage, her twin sister, which bears the relation to the former, of Luxury to Necessity?

If a portion of the Press must on all hands be admitted to furnish some honest food to the thoughtful mind, even though this be adulterated by ten thousand times its bulk and weight of pure poison, it is difficult to seriously urge a defence for an institution which, at its best, is but the sugar that coats the pill of Precept and Example, and for the most part serves but to beguile an idle hour.

More strange than all is the undeniable social phenomenon of the hour, which has chosen the moment when the Stage has declined to the lowest point, to lift the status of actors from being outcasts of society to an honourable position in the rank of artistic professions. While even so lately as one hundred and fifty years ago, the Church refused burial to those who died within its ranks, now bishops patronise its votaries and think not ill of presiding at its functions, and countless divines from their pulpits proclaim its moral and intellectual capabilities and resources. Such is the force of fashion in this free and independent country of ours, that, like a snowball once set in motion, there is no limit to the size and momentum which it attains. Nor is it only the pale beams of the clergy but the noontide sun of royal favour which shines down upon our modern Pandemonium. For everything in England which is patronised and petted by Royalty, as surely as the stars revolve round the sun, gains force, and strength, and votaries, from top to bottom of the social scale—each class vying with the one above, and striving to prove its title to distinction by exaggerating the follies and aping the manners of the class above them.

Add to this parasitic and sybaritic scum of the Social pot the entire power of the Press—tied to the Stage by the closest bonds of mutual interest, sympathies, and above all, pecuniary profit—and it is easy to see that the Stage, with Fashion filling her sails and with Advertisement, which in these days stands for the guinea stamp, at her back, possesses the greatest motive-powers of the nineteenth century.

Theatres springing up in every part of the city, and speculators eagerly spying out each hole and cranny where Thespis has not yet found a niche, would seem to furnish proof that the Stage is in a flourishing condition, in spite of music-halls and other irregular places of entertainment which in each succeeding year, in some measure owing to the growing inferiority of Stage productions, or perhaps a declining taste for the tedious propriety and irksome deprivation of beer and tobacco which is enforced in the better-class theatres, go far to dispute the empire of the legitimate drama. Nevertheless it is an open secret that extravagance and luxury in scenery, decoration and stage accessories generally, to say nothing of the ladies' dresses which have, in many theatres, almost taken the place of good acting in the public favour, together with the ever-increasing salaries of leading "Stars," conspire to diminish the margin of profit to the speculator in most cases to a vanishing point.

We hear much of the injustice to the theatres by the encroachments of the music-halls where the facilities of smoking and drinking during the performance attract those who are neither able nor willing to conform to the standard of dress and propriety which of late years has been strictly enforced in the best seats of the London theatres. Be this as it may, it cannot be denied that the nation as a whole presents the singular spectacle of a civilised people, whose higher classes, wholly indifferent to the merits or demerits of the entertainment dished up to them, provided the seats are comfortable, the theatre is clean and fresh painted, the scenery and dresses luxurious, and above all served up at such an hour as not to interfere with the late dinners in vogue, frequent the theatres in ever-increasing numbers, while the quality of the fare provided declines day by day.

The fashion of theatre-going is even making way among the middle classes in the teeth of the strong Puritan leaven which

almost entirely tabooed such frivolous entertainments to their earlier generations, and is slowly gaining ground, according as sound and meritorious pieces are brought out (which, it must be confessed, generally reduce the managers to debt and despair), to tempt their more cultivated tastes : while a theatre-going working class, whose dramatic views, in direct opposition to the two preceding divisions, the first of which deride morality in drama as bitterly as the middle-classes decry drama without morality—place Sentiment in the first rank, caring nothing for the fantastic novelties and fine-dressing plays of miscalled modern drama—insist upon the old-fashioned “ Poetic Justice ” of a bygone date, and demand, above all, a moral lesson where each Jack wins his Jill and the villain of the piece obtains his adequate reward.

It is commonly believed in well-informed circles that whatever remnant of support can be relied upon for the legitimate drama as opposed to the flimsy trash which for many years past has usurped and indeed almost effaced the memory of British drama, must be looked for in the unregarded ranks of the middle classes.

The rising generation of theatre-goers may be divided into two classes. On one hand, there seems little doubt, to judge by the success obtained in town and province by the more serious plays, as opposed to the rubbish that has been foisted upon the public in the more showy and fashionable places of resort, that authors who complain that the public care nothing for solid food, but desire light hashes of “ musical-turns,” strung together with French Opera-Bouffe music and an abundance of scenic variety, are merely inventing excuses for their own incompetence : while, on the other, the richer and better-represented in the Society-Press have come to regard the theatre as a resort which, in the first place, gives a pretext for a dinner at a restaurant or a fashionable hotel, in the second place affords a comfortable change from a crowded restaurant to the comparative ease and comfort of an armchair in the stalls, and in the third place either affords (as at the music-halls) an opportunity of smoking cigarettes and passing a couple of noisy hours, or (if in a theatre) to have ears tickled and eyes gratified by the sight

of shapely limbs and white shoulders, and the latest creations of Parisian millinery.

In view of the numberless complaints from every shade of opinion and every grade of critical authority in the kingdom, there is no need for wasting powder over the atrocities which pass for plays in the more fashionable of our London theatres. Suffice it to say that it is well understood that Shakespeare spells disaster, to judge by the ever-shrinking minority who still cling to such bygone methods, while the solid drama as represented by Coleman and Goldsmith—succeeded by the graceful burlesques, and later, the so-called drawing-room “ineptitudes” of twenty years ago—has lately settled down into a class of entertainment which is neither fish, flesh nor fowl, nor good red-herring, and remarkable for nothing but the absence of dialogue, literary value, wit, or wisdom. If Shakespeare speaks truly when he says, the “Stage holds up a mirror to nature,” and if it can be maintained that any substantial portion of the intelligence of the country still resort to the theatres to while an idle hour away, then, indeed, the fall from the days of Shakespeare to the present is more marked than any similar declension in any branch of human activity. One can but suppose that among the cultivated classes only those whose energies are enfeebled by over-indulgence and enervated by luxury can thus prostitute the feeble remains of intelligence they still possess at the shrine of a degrading fashion.

Perhaps among the most intolerable of later plays produced in our fashionable theatres, French translations of current Parisian successes have played a leading part. Here the natural disparity between the two languages, which, in many cases, defies all attempts at successful translation, usually serves but to coarsen an originally indelicate plot, while the wit that gleams in the original is, frequently in the English translation, rendered conspicuous by its absence.

As to the ephemeral rubbish which is dumped by the ton upon the English Stage, mainly through collusive tricks of the Press and Dramatic Authors (“arcades ambo”), judging by the lengthy runs which have been recorded during the last few years, it would seem that handsome women, fine dresses, magnificent mounting, and a total absence of plot, combined with an assort-

ment of light airs, such as used to be associated with French Opera-Bouffe, have netted the largest returns; and as a natural consequence engendered a larger crop of imitators than any other description of entertainment.

There is yet another novel element of the highest importance, without which well-filled stalls are well-nigh impossible to hope for. The average playgoer of the higher classes who is content to pay ten shillings for a stall at an entertainment for which his more enlightened grandfather would have scorned to pay a shilling, has not only become habituated to the senseless introduction of music-hall "turns," dances and songs, which it is needless to say have not only no connection with, but frequently upset whatever trace of consecutive action the play may contain, but he looks for it, expects it, and is not happy till he gets it. "Hinc illæ lachrymæ." Managers have not only to provide actors but also dancers and tumblers as well.

Another class of (usually imported) histrionic imbecility is greatly to the fore. Just as our comic papers import American wit *ad libitum* from New York or "Frisco," so, too, the most successful plays that tickle the ear of Fashionable London of late years have come from the pen of American writers, many of which it must be admitted are by no means devoid of wit and "go," but totally deficient in that element of *probability* without which the most facetious plays lose all merit in the discerning eye of judgment, while, *per contra*, they certainly possess that plentiful sprinkling of foreign slang which seems to exercise an astonishing fascination upon the British mind. As a sample, I recollect a play which obtained a certain vogue in the clubs and drawing-rooms through the constant repetition of the current American affirmative, "Why certainly" !!

As for home-grown productions, such as "Charley's Aunt" and similar exhibitions of senseless buffoonery of the most crude and primitive type with utterly improbable situations and a plentiful lack of wit, were it not an accepted axiom that Englishmen appraise the value of an actor or a play according as the Press tells them that he or it is worthy or unworthy of praise, it might be argued from "length of run," that such plays represent the high-water mark of English popularity. It would be painful, indeed, to the patriotic Englishman if an intelligent

foreigner were to adopt such a standard to gauge the quality of our theatrical work and the characteristics which insure success ; while if he has traced the gradual introduction into the domestic drama of the familiar elements of conjugal infidelity, spiced with the innuendoes for which the Gallic drama has been so justly deprecated and in no country more vigorously than our own moral England, it comes to him as a startling revelation that the frequent recurrence to foreign plays is mainly attributable to a growing demand for that license of speech and manners which, at least in the eyes of the upper classes, lends a special charm and an indispensable spice to the " up-to-date drama " of the twentieth century.

Still more significant to the eyes of every well-wisher of his country is the growing practice of admitting young ladies to the free use and exercise of privileges which in bygone days only men and married women were permitted to enjoy. For it must be remembered that while in France only men and married women swell the ranks of those who patronise the dubious creations of the Parisian stage, or read the novels which must fill with surprise and disgust those who are not entirely hardened to vice, in England and America the entire field of Drama and Literature is thrown widely open to boys and girls for them to imbibe whatever nourishment or poison they may chance to find there.

If any doubt exists as to the quality of so-called drama provided for the provinces, it may be interesting to my readers to know that I devoted myself during two successive winters at Bournemouth and Ramsgate to a critical observation of the theatrical fare provided at these popular places of winter resort by a weekly visit to the theatre. There, as in most provincial towns, it is usual for a travelling company to perform for the space of one week. In rare instances two plays would be performed, but far more frequently it is the practice of provincial travelling companies to perform some " favourite " of last season, at Bournemouth, or similar places, for the delectation of the Rank and Fashion, while at Ramsgate or smaller towns of business and commerce, the invariably weekly-changed stock-play performed throughout the winter was of the type which used to be associated with the Surrey melodrama. Much as in the crowded working towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire, whose dirty theatres are

usually crammed, at any rate as to the cheaper places, with mill-hands and factory lads, to judge by the gorgeous posters, displaying, in brilliantly-coloured illustration, sundry acts of murder, suicide, or torture, it would appear that the stamp of performance supplied to Ramsgate represents the average provincial output of the British drama, and appeals to similar classes.

The result of my theatrical experiences during the two winters spent in Bournemouth and Ramsgate may be briefly summed up as follows:—In Ramsgate, which may fairly be said to typify an average working population chiefly employed in fishing, of from ten to twenty thousand inhabitants—where the stalls were usually empty, while the cheaper galleries, pit, and circles, were well-filled as a rule, chiefly with men, and more sparsely with women of the lowest classes—it would seem, roughly speaking, that the purveyors of theatrical filth dealt almost exclusively in loosely-strung series of murders, robberies, suicides, abductions, seductions, and other sensational situations of the highest improbability, painfully constructed for the main end of introducing some recondite method of torture, or scene of horror, or any frightful catastrophe fitted for harrowing the feelings or terrifying the imagination of its hearers. Another popular and abundant variety consisted in detective stories, slightly altered for theatrical purposes, made up of the usual string of impossible situations, and still more impossible sequences of the daring acts and hair-breadth escapes so dear to juvenile imagination,—which stories may be safely said to have spawned of late years a prolific brood of the cheapest and vilest literature that the eye can see or the mind conceive, at a price which places them within the reach of the poorest school-child. I need not repeat that such methods of ensnaring immature children of all ages into familiarity with the dregs of the population, must necessarily not only be productive of bad results, but, if we may judge by the well-known tendency of similar literature, cannot fail to implant the first lessons of crime and guide their steps in the direction of the jail and the gallows.

It is regrettable that some effective censorship of the Press should not be adopted, or that the Police Regulations should not require the Stipendiary Magistrates of our great towns to



attack what every right-thinking man must consider to be a serious source of popular demoralisation.

It is unnecessary to quote well-known facts that can be ascertained by a cursory examination of the daily papers in which we have the absolute proofs of the effects of such literature upon the youth of our towns. How many boys springing from the working and even the lower middle classes have been led away by the bad example of such literature? who, by their own confession, and also through the testimony of their parents and relatives, have disclosed the painful truth that the seeds of criminality are too often sown even in the most respectable circles by the introduction and perusal of the atrocious cheap literature and blood-and-thunder drama of the day. Nor can such moral filth be excused upon the ground of authors being unable to sell their wares unless they descend to the supposed depths of the populace for whom they cater. It is continually urged on behalf of our so-called playwrights that they are compelled much against their will to lower their style to the supposed level of their audiences. A close examination of two or three large seaside towns and an experience of the plays provided for their delectation have convinced me that the degradation proceeds from, and is almost wholly attributable to, the incapacity and imbecility of the providers, rather than to the taste or want of taste of their audiences. If the old style of moral and miracle plays and Biblical illustrations were resorted to, I firmly believe that with the exception of the hobbledehoys and ragtag and bobtail of the great cities, our provincial theatres would be as well or better filled than at present, and that the higher-priced seats would be resorted to by the middle and shop-keeping classes who are now conspicuous by their absence. Thus the profit to the theatrical managers would be nowise lessened, while the improved tone and feeling could not but sensibly react upon the population of our towns, with no small advantage to public health and morals.

I have before hinted that the middle or professional-cum-trading classes who are, as a rule, more serious and more religious and more appreciative of moral and literary excellence than the wealthier supporters of our higher-class London theatres, are in a great measure debarred from the use of the theatre by the ancient

traditions of Puritanism which still linger among them, and which are very properly kept up and fostered by the undoubted immorality and debasing influence of the modern so-called Drama. If, however, the revival of something after the style of the old miracle plays or the later German moral dramas constructed out of Biblical incidents, which are still in vogue in the less sophisticated portions of Teutonic Europe, were to be reintroduced to our provincial towns, though they might involve a loss in gallery and stalls, the middle classes, which are now repelled and divorced from theatrical patronage, would be attracted to swell the circle of stage-votaries. It is most noticeable that such serious moral pieces as the "Sign of the Cross" (or similar semi-religious plays), however ill-staged and ill-written and bald in dialogue and devoid of literary merit, when produced in the provinces, where the usual blood-and-thunder "sensations" have utterly failed to fill the best seats, golden harvests and crowded houses have brought joy to the managerial heart, with no small advantage to the community at large.

If no strictures can be sufficiently severe and no condemnation sufficiently strong for the conduct of those who do not hesitate to debase our youth by dramatic representation of the foulest trash that the human mind can invent or conceive, on the other hand one cannot but marvel to see the attitude of the British public in the presence of the insults offered to its good nature and judgment by the sickening transformation of the graceful if well-worn nursery tales of Christmas pantomimes into the senseless jumble of music-hall "turns," vulgar dances, and leg-and-arm exhibitions, with which latter-day managers have made us familiar.

Bad as is the case in London, I was thunderstruck to observe at a fashionable southern seaside resort before an audience embracing the children and youthful relatives of the most cultivated families of the higher classes, a so-called pantomime which one would imagine, even in the most hardened "theatre-goer" of the smart set, could scarcely, from its vulgarity and indecency, fail to excite a mingled sense of shame and disgust.

My first impulse was to write to the *Standard*, in discharge of what I considered a public duty in order to draw attention to the danger incurred in an unsuspected quarter by parents or

teachers who imprudently send their children to the pantomime in fulfilment of a customary Christmas obligation. Previous experience in similar ventures, however, warned me, upon further reflection, that an attempt to open the public eyes to the gross abuses that exist in England under the full protection of the Law would invariably be met and answered by the offenders themselves under a pseudonym with the full connivance and knowledge of the newspaper in which they were writing, couched in language of virtuous indignation mingled with surprise that the complainant should betray such narrow-mindedness and ignorance of the legitimate aspirations of Art, rounded off with the usual jeremiad about Philistines and Mrs. Grundy, etc., etc.

Nor is this the only trap that awaits the unwary and inexperienced Briton who fondly imagines that his fellow-countrymen only yearn to know of wrongs in order to remove them, and of abuses in order to reform, regardless of the pitfalls of the Law which in this luckless land ever watches over the evil-doer and lets the well-doer shift for himself; for right in his path like a dragon stands the Libel Law, that patron saint of rogues and swindlers, who, like the angel on guard at the gates of Paradise, stands with a flaming sword challenging him to do his worst.

It will hardly be believed that upon consulting my solicitor as to the risks of warning the Public against sending their children to a Christmas entertainment where the vulgarity of the dialogue was only equalled by the indecency of the dresses, coupled with an appeal for an alteration of the Law in this respect so that children who are invited to a children's entertainment might by some means be safeguarded from contamination—I was assured, that I should incur a grave risk of a civil action for libel with possibly heavy damages which might vary from a thousand pounds to a farthing according to the temper of the jury or judge who tried the case—with the further explanation, that as the town of B——h only possessed one high-class theatre, a judge and jury would hold that in the first place my remarks could only apply to that and no other; that in the second place, since public spirit was a thing not to be thought of, and if it existed, could not possibly apply to this case, such strictures must alone proceed from the malice, envy or jealousy of the complainant,

presumably the owner or champion of a rival establishment, animated with a desire to ruin the manager of the aforesaid theatre ; and in the third place (he urged) that, while I might be unable to procure a single respectable witness who was present at the performance and willing to give testimony in my favour, in view of them being mostly ladies and children who would undoubtedly object to appear in Court, my opponent would produce without any difficulty a crowd of " independent witnesses " from among his own dependents and supporters. I regretted more that I was unable to bring forward this flagrant example of what may be called the forcible induction of fashionable immorality into the hearts and homes of an unoffending public, because, warned by previous failures, I had devised for the occasion what I believe to be a very successful method of eliciting an expression of public opinion upon a question of direct fact. I have always observed in similar controversies upon artistic or social subjects where passion is more deeply stirred than elsewhere, that those who reply (almost always under assumed names) to genuine and well-founded attacks, nearly always deprive the controversy of any real interest by their too transparent advocacy, while, on the other hand, they generally avoid the precise charge brought against them and labour to distract attention from the real issue by wandering into the by-paths of irrelevance or vituperation. I therefore proposed simply to challenge those who disputed or attempted to qualify my strictures to set down on paper, if they dared, a correct and accurate description of the female costumes employed, both as to their shape and colour, and leave the verdict to a dispassionate public.

We are continually told by indignant correspondents that managers must really mend their ways and produce better plays ! But why ? we may be pardoned for asking. So long as the British matron shames not to resort thither with her unblushing charges, and the fatuous Briton is resigned to pay half a guinea for a poor pennyworth of balderdash plus a comfortable armchair, and even jostle each other for the infliction—who can expect theatrical managers, being merely human, to raise the quality of their wares ?

Before we can effectually grapple with the causes and

phenomena observable in most departments of English Art, we must endeavour to exhibit in the plainest light those facets of social life which reflect light upon peculiarities which, though universally attributed to us by our foreign friends, are not only a subject of debate but also of indignant repudiation by our fellow-countrymen.

I may here observe the singular fact that while our self-styled artists—pictorial, sculptorial, or tonsorial—rely generally upon hard cash rather than genius to push their pretensions to fame, and even doctors, dentists, architects and lawyers have to resort to advertisement in order to ensure public support, history and experience tell us that our greatest artists were originally paid for their master-pieces sums which bear no proportion whatever to present market values.

Another thing to be observed is the extremely small proportion of individuals who embrace art as a profession as compared with our continental neighbours. Nevertheless, contrary to what might be expected, though we can in no sense pretend to vie with the latter in the scope and variety of their pictorial and sculptorial output, the prices demanded and obtained by our popular artists in these days greatly exceed the fees obtainable by artists of any other nation. It might be urged in explanation of this ascertained fact that the unusual costliness of successful art and the prices currently charged for the services of the liberal and artistic professions in this country should be attributed to the greater liberality or the greater wealth of our fellow-countrymen, as compared with our continental neighbours. For the fact that it has raised continental prices and that the echoes of the astonishing figures extorted from John Bull by native and foreign artists while contributing largely to swell his importance have greatly added to his expenses abroad, we have only to look at the "milor" of the last century and his fabulous reputation of the past.

No doubt from 50 to 100 years ago, when Englishmen first began to travel, it is improbable that any but men of large fortune, unless engaged in commerce, were tempted to brave the discomforts of foreign travel or found any inducement beyond what the love of adventure or desire of forming a collection of pictures or statues could supply. Since, however, travelling facilities became greater, and railways and steam-boats abridged

distances, and hotels were multiplied where objects of natural beauty or interest attracted travellers from various lands, the "milor" class was quickly superseded by the commercial or commercially inclined, who, supplemented by the flood of American and later of German travellers which seems to have set in between the 70's and 80's of the last century, while giving an impetus to competition in foreign articles of vertu, introduced an element of cautiousness and calculation which has greatly tended to reduce foreign prices.

On the other hand the more rapid development of wealth in the Anglo-Saxon races joined to a stationary if not lessening flow of recruits into the army of Anglo-Saxon art, added to the enormous ignorance and want of taste of the overwhelming majority of their Patrons, seems to account for this singular variation in the laws of demand and supply.

From this we may fairly argue that in the first place England is essentially a commercial nation, that their tendencies are in the direction of money-making, and that they are not in a general way addicted to the cultivation of either the polite Sciences or the Arts, or indeed to any subject which does not promise immediate remuneration; with the result that our artistic and professional "Services" generally, by reason of that singular mixture of ignorance and prejudice added to an inherent dislike to be thought mean or shabby (which I take to be a marked characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race) has contributed greatly not only to raise the current requirements of life but still more the cost of artistic and other luxuries at home and abroad, and hence to corrupt the secret sources and invade the most sacred stronghold of those arts which purify and elevate the soul of a nation. For the soul of a nation is purified and elevated in proportion as a larger or less number are lifted beyond buying or selling, to the contemplation of, and intimacy with, the secrets of nature through the refining channels of true philosophy and religion, sound and healthy literature, knowledge, and art!

The first consideration when an Englishman thinks of buying a picture is, What do the papers say about the man? In the second place, What does he make by painting? The result is that we in England and the United States, alone apparently among nations, are guided in matters of Art by Press criticisms which

in nine cases out of ten are merely puffs paid for in hard cash by the object of their praise, scores of newspapers having their being entirely in the manufacture of "puffs" more or less veiled for throwing dust in the eyes of the British public. As for the Ladies' papers they are scarcely veiled at all, and it is easy for the rankest outsider to read between the lines the paid advertisement in the idiotic drivel about the "gauzy and ethereal charms of Miss Amarilda Jones," or Lady Sally Twoshoes' magnificent *crêpe de chine* or "how lovely Miss Plantagenet de Brown looked in pale straw with just a touch of black or red," etc., etc.

One hardly knows whether the gullibility or the folly of the fashionable world is to be pitied most, when we find them willing to pay for "Society Papers" devoted to inane gossip and the record of senseless doings already paid for in hard cash by the performers themselves, with the full knowledge that the said papers, being entirely supported by advertisement and the insane desire of fashionable ladies to invest money in their own self-aggrandisement, the proprietors would be satisfied if their fair supporters were to distribute the paper among their friends without a farthing of remuneration.

As with Dress so with Art. In England it is not so necessary to shine, as to advertise cleverly one's supposed proficiency. No doubt it is expensive to obtain telling and cleverly written references to the marvellous talent of that rising young novelist Jones, or to obtain innocent looking paragraphs setting forth how the town is turned topsy-turvy by that remarkable artist Mr. Brown who has just returned from sketching in the East! Nor is it a bad plan to invest money in buying up your own picture through a third person for a substantial sum: for so surely as a hundred guineas are reported as having been paid for the latest daub of an unknown artist in the daily papers, numberless offers are made from all quarters from eager investors in "rising talent" ready to buy whatever he has to sell. In all such matters it is only the first step that costs. After that Success goes by itself—at least in England.

It is said of a late well-known actor, usually referred to as being at the head of his profession, that after labouring in vain for some 30 years in out-of-the-way places in the leading parts of a second-class company, and having come into a small windfall

from a distant relative, he thought the best investment to make was to lay out the money in Press notices. It will hardly be believed that in a moment the aforesaid second-class actor at once leaped into fame. By the investment of a couple of thousand pounds and an appearance "for ten days only" in a first-class London theatre, he woke up and found himself famous.

Nor is it otherwise with the learned professions. Such is the widely-admitted necessity for outward Show and Hollow Pretence in this Land of Sham and Humbug, that capable doctors openly avow the necessity of maintaining equipages and establishments out of all proportion to their means in order to procure the reasonable fees to which their talents entitle them, while distinguished lawyers have left it on record that in order to secure fat briefs and heavy fees it is almost as necessary to "go the pace" and shine, at least in Society papers, among the votaries of fashion and frivolity, as to burn the midnight oil in the painful acquisition of Hale and Coke.



## CHAPTER XVII

### TASTE AND TACT

PERHAPS there are few things that contribute more powerfully to form, or rather deform, the social and artistic condition of England than the absence of taste.

Strangely enough we are not only as a nation almost wholly bereft of that sixth sense (as it has been aptly called) in which the old Greeks excelled above all other nations, but we do not seem to have invented a word as yet which corresponds to the "Aisthesis" of that nation, to say nothing of the conception of that which it dubs in common with all the Latin races, "taste."

And be it remembered always that the Romans, like ourselves, were the butt of the more artistic Greek, precisely as we are to the more refined Parisian or Greek of these modern days. Hence it seems that their inability to imagine or define its composition had to be supplemented by a grotesque attribution of the word "taste," or "gustum," which being derived from the sensation which proceeds from an agreeable feeling in the mouth, or a tickling of the palate, has produced not only a complete confusion of ideas, but tends to attribute to the grosser external sensations, what is in truth a mixed quality of the mind and soul.

The Frenchman and the Spaniard, æsthetic to the core as any Athenian of the Attic Republic, distinguish that ineffable perception which is innate refinement as to external objects by the name of "bon goût," or "buen gusto," in order to differentiate it from the enjoyment by the palate of "taste," pure and simple. It is fair to say that there exists a perception of some deficiency in the term "taste," as used in England, since the term "tact" is often applied in its stead.

Now it seems not improbable that had we at an early date adopted the term "good taste," in order to distinguish it from the more vulgar sense of taste by mouth, there might have grown up among us, in the first place, a comprehension of the meaning of the term, and in the second place a desire for its fulfilment,

which would have amounted to a step in the direction of national æsthetic progress.

Nothing strikes the Englishman who lives abroad and is intimately acquainted with the ways and manners of foreigners more than this indifference to taste which sets us, along with our trans-Atlantic cousins, on a totally different plane of civilisation from the Latin peoples. It will be urged possibly that the Teutonic races are very much in the same boat as ourselves. It may be so ; but I strongly opine that the apprehension of true art on the part of the more cultivated sections of the German people in its widest sense, is in some ways more healthy and desirable than that of the modern representatives of ancient Rome. As to their practice, it is well to always remember that the Germans and their northern congeners are in point of refinement and the higher arts of civilisation but mushrooms of yesterday compared with the heirs of ancient Rome, to whom the tradition of pre-Christian civilisation has descended in direct line.

It is said that the poet Byron cared little or nothing for his poetic reputation, but was extremely sensitive as to his athletic prowess. Strange as it may seem, most men are proudest and most sensitive as to the qualities which are least generally attributed to them.

There is, perhaps, no quality—that is, if we may judge by common speech—by which English men and women differentiate each other more critically, or to which they assign a greater value, than tact. That individuals of our race possess it in the highest degree, especially cultivated women—at any rate in so far as concerns external matters and external show—can hardly be doubted. Indeed, I have frequently heard the most competent judges declare that no more refined type can be found than the cultivated Englishwoman ; but in my experience this can also be said of the Russians and the Americans of the United States. In both cases the remark of Napoleon the Great, "Scratch the Russian and you find the Cossack," is equally applicable.

But in its widest national sense as applied to cultivation and refinement, the perception of and search after what is fitting, beautiful and good, in opposition to what is vulgar, repulsive, and unsuitable, is conspicuous by its absence here in England and North America in a degree which has no parallel, as far as I am

aware, in any land. Perhaps the main cause of this would seem to be an excessive devotion to sport in the territorial aristocracy, which from the nature of Britons, influencing very considerably the plutocracy and through that channel permeating every rank of society, has always conspired to develop amongst us that roughness, almost amounting to brutality, which marks the conquering nation whose instinctive distrust and dislike to politeness as a sign of subjection or inferiority is joined to a hearty contempt of external show of any kind. To judge, however, by the literature of the sixteenth century and the most faithful description of current English habits, it would seem as if the more cultivated classes had risen to a very high level of, at all events, superficial polish during the Elizabethan age, and many traces of high culture are to be found even so late as the Civil War. Then came the Interregnum, when Puritanism overwhelmed the arts and graces, and preachers sneered at all refinement as snares and temptations of the Evil One. When the Restoration came, French fashions and reckless luxury took the place of refinement; extravagance was the rule, and dissoluteness of manners came to be considered the mark of the true gentleman. With the ruder Dutch fashions which came in with Dutch William, the heavy British nature swung back the pendulum of manners. The eighteenth century was a period of debasement, degradation, drink, riot, and debauchery, from which not even the National Church was exempt. And it needs but to read the graphic story of the "Court of England" in the earlier years of the nineteenth century, by Miss Fanny Burney, to believe that the reaction in a wholesomer and healthier direction made little or no strides among the richer classes until far into the reign of Victoria.

It may be said, therefore, that the brief upward strides of the British nation in the direction of æsthetic cultivation after a setback of two hundred years in spite of Wordsworths, Coleridges, Ruskins and Brownings, rapidly declined under the waning influence of an aged Queen, who sank her interest in her kingdom and her moral influence over Society in the grief of her beloved husband, until led astray, it would seem, by the backslidings of our volatile neighbours during the Second Empire, we once more plunged into a vortex of vulgar extravagance and dissolute luxury.

which has again set back the clock and revived the memories of the degrading years which followed the Restoration.

Nor is the outlook at the present hour more promising, but, indeed, quite the reverse. For our aristocracy, almost ruined by the reverses of bad years, failing tenants and bad prices, unless possessed of mines or town property, are scarcely able to hold their heads above water, with the natural result that the standard of luxury being once fixed at the highest limit to which human ostentation and lavish wealth can extend, the few who are able "to keep the ball rolling" are compelled to invite the yearly crop of enriched financiers, mine owners and speculators to fill up the breach. Add to this that the omnivorous Jews, to whom the fall of the English aristocracy comes as a boon and a blessing, with the astuteness of their race press closely on their successful Christian rivals, and avail themselves of the gaps in the ranks of Society to crowd the envied portals from which they had been so long rigorously excluded.

Then came the flood of rich Americans. And the cry is, Still they come! until at length, from being once the most exclusive of nations, we have come to harbour here, in London, the most heterogeneous medley—miscalled by the Press, Society—that the world ever saw; whose characteristics are luxury without refinement, extravagance without taste, restlessness without decorum, whose path to distinction lies in lavish display, and whose highest aim is vulgar notoriety.

Some will object, "But since you call the French the Greeks of modern days, are we to believe that it is only lack of imitation of our neighbours across the channel in which we are deficient?" To this I reply, that a superficial examination of society, art, literature, and a review of all that is great and good in France, as exhibited through the colours and eyes of the Press, is apt to present Frenchmen in an entirely false light. The gaudy vulgarity of the régime of the Second Empire, where money reigned supreme, quite overshadowed and stifled the real life of France which pursued its quiet course beneath. The true Society with culture and refinement loathing the usurper who had robbed them of their liberties, was entirely divorced from the noisy herd that clamoured in the daily Press for recognition and advertisement, and whose doings filled Paris, and through their pages the

world's eye, with the luxury and dissoluteness of its cosmopolitan and exotic barbarism.

Humiliating as it is to relate, is it not absolutely certain that this figment of the penny papers, miscalled Society, this Baal before whom men and women bow down by the hundred thousand here in England, and even more so in the United States, as is apparent from the numberless allusions in the Press and daily records of their senseless doings, has so bewitched large sections of otherwise sane men and women, that they are not only willing, but all too eager to learn even so much as the most trifling details concerning the darling objects of their envy and admiration?

Thus we have a vicious circle in which the attractive Lady Snooks-Gibbins and the exquisite Mr. Montgomery Jones—who, by a large expenditure of cash in newspaper advertisements, procure a daily record of their doings and compel public attention to their senseless extravagance or fantastic imbecilities—incredible as it may seem, raise up a crop of admirers, who subsidise the society rags which subsist upon the vanity of such upstarts, and are glad to pay for the honour of becoming more intimately acquainted with the sordid details of their life, daily habits, and the precise sums which they spend in perfumery or jewellery, by buying the newspapers in which their daily doings are recorded!

Let us for a moment trace the progress of vulgarity in its most striking external aspect, and observe how the sanctity of home and the respect of what is gentlest and noblest in the realm has given way under trans-Atlantic methods and the omniscient and omnipresent power of the Press, to the prurient curiosity and blatant vulgarity which is the distinguishing mark of our era.

When I was first in New York thirty years ago I was much astonished to read in the daily papers a record of the comings and goings of the smartest and most opulent ladies of that city of pleasure and luxury, together with an account of their personal decoration and the presumed value of their jewellery, and an accurate description of their personal appearance, equipage and fortune. Mentioning these circumstances to a lady of fashion in New York as an extraordinary and unexpected incident, being, as it seemed, wholly contrary to the spirit and practice of the Republican theory, she answered indignantly,

“I see no reason why our doings should not be recorded just as yours are in your own Court Journal.” “But,” said I, “that only refers to Dukes and Duchesses.” She instantly replied with admirable presence of mind and ready wit, “But, my dear sir, you must remember that we are all Dukes and Duchesses here !”

It will hardly be believed that in 1868 or 1869 lists were frequently published in the leading New York papers with an accurate description of the faces, manners, dress and prospects of the marriageable young ladies and gentlemen whose families engrossed public interest, not for personal merit or political weight but for such strange motives as a lavish display of expensive horses or jewellery or some such futile reasons. It would seem that from that time forward trans-Atlantic Vulgarities and Ostentation has steadily advanced by leaps and bounds up to the present hour.

The interviewing system (of entirely American origin) hand-in-hand with that system of personal advertisement which is the outcome of Press commercialism was, soon after that date, warmly welcomed on our side of the water, and in less than ten years has become the rule rather than the exception. Within twenty years, probably, no less than a hundred papers, all more or less evanescent and ephemeral, were run upon the lines of personal advertisement, while public inquisitiveness seems—to judge by the gutter press—daily to grow by what it feeds on.

In the present year of grace, 1904, to use the expressive language of the West, we seem to have “touched bottom.” For not content with thrusting their blatant vulgarities upon our national customs and reducing us to their own level, there are London newspapers to be found which are capable of placing in the front rank of their daily news a telegraphic account as to how Caleb F. Washington Brown expended a quarter of a million dollars in paving his “avenue” with terrines of paté de perigord, or a minute description of how Mrs. Lafayette Snooks electrified New York by driving down Broadway in a papier-maché chariot drawn by gilt ostriches.

Here we are again brought back in a forcible manner to the position that we have discussed in a previous chapter, and which points to a degeneration of manners and public intelligence of

which the records of the 15th and 16th centuries seem to afford no parallel. On the other hand it might be fairly said that our retrograde social movement, social at any rate in its more fashionable developments, being greatly influenced by greed, patronage, and the breath of royal favour, seems to have dated from the advent of the Dutch, and to have been carried on throughout the German dynasty, till, accelerated by Judaic and trans-Atlantic ostentation and love of display, it bids fair to reach a point at which the nation's good sense will at length rebel and return to more normal and healthy channels. It is not impossible that a serious reaction may take place in the near future, since, as far as can be seen, we have already attained the utmost limit of self-advertisement, interview-mongering and society-trumpeting, of which the united efforts of the Press is capable. Now, since such eccentricities invariably attain their apogee before descending in their erratic flight, this desirable revolution may not be so very remote. Still it is not easy to believe that a system that floods the commercial Press of our country with the gold of Pactolus should ever voluntarily be abandoned. Until a sense of shame for what is nothing less than a national disgrace overspreads the entire nation—until England, as a whole, is convinced of the degradation of reading about the senseless follies of self-advertising idiots with more money than brains, in the place of wholesome instruction, serious literature and rational entertainment, it does not seem likely that any solid reformation in the Press of this country is to be looked for.

In the domain of artistic taste, no clearer proofs of our deficiency can be adduced than the notorious fact that our great English painters of the 18th century who were paid a bare pittance for their unrivalled works were so little appreciated in their own country that it has taken fully a hundred years for their merits to be discovered, and then only through the critical literature of France and Belgium, and the enhanced prices which the knowledge of their merits obtained at the hands of Americans and Frenchmen.

It is well known that the admirable portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds for which he obtained from 40 to 100 guineas, and those of Gainsborough whose usual fee was scarcely more, or to descend to a later date to the Shayers and Constables, or the painters of

the Norwich school, were so little valued by their countrymen that it is no exaggeration to say that their works fetch as many guineas now as they brought in shillings to their authors.

In the domain of music the contrast is even more remarkable. To say nothing of the fact that with the solitary exception of George Braham, who, being educated in Italy and having made his reputation by singing in that country, was an exception to the rule in the sense that he arrived in England as an accepted exponent of Italian art, no Englishman or woman could hope to find favour among their countrymen unless their origin was disguised under a foreign name.

As early as the beginning of the 18th century we hear Addison in the *Spectator* lamenting the incurable inability of English men and women to tolerate a singer, musician, or artist, who had not the sallow face or the well-oiled jetty ringlets of the traditional foreign musician, adding that it was useless to expect approbation in this benighted land unless possessed of such attributes as these, and a name ending in "ini," "etti," or "elli." These words, written in Queen Anne's time, mark clearly the first stage of our relapse into barbarism. And if no other proof were obtainable, it would be easy to trace the artistic and social declension of the nation by the furniture and structure of our houses, which speak eloquently to us of the boozing habits of the days of good Queen Anne. The little settees round the fire, the chimney corners, the cosy nooks—which (discreditable as it be, are universally imitated in these days in the most fashionable quarters of London)—constructed for the most part for greater facilities of enjoying the prevailing luxuries of pipes, beer and punch, qualified later on by tea-drinking on the part of the ladies—attest the influence by which the parlours, galleries, and saloons of the past became dwarfed and cramped into mere low-ceiled snuggeries or thinly disguised tap-rooms.

Nor do the current stories regarding the newly-invented Opera which was introduced about this time from Italy tend to raise our opinion of our countrymen's musical taste in those sordid days. We read that the gay world of London when Opera was first introduced in Queen Anne's reign was convulsed from end to end with the respective merits of their favourite singers. Then, as now, it seems more than probable that they cared little or



nothing for the Opera, but rabidly backed their favourite singer with the same vigour that their brothers and husbands backed their equine favourites upon the racecourse. It is said that fair disputants carried their animosity to such a ferocious extent that a lady of high rank was seen to reach over and pull the feathers out of the headdress of her neighbour in an adjoining box in a fit of indignation and anger at the applause which she had lavished on a pet of the opposite camp.

As it was then so it is now. In every English drawing-room there are vigorous disputes as to whether Jones or Brown is the better actor, or Miss Clarinette Tomkins' charms surpass those of Dolly Montmorency, but rarely are the comparative merits of current plays a subject of serious discussion, since such an effort would demand a greater strain of intellectual exertion than is compatible with that languid indifference which modern fashions require.

Once more I exclaim, Where is the pride of olden days—the self-respect which every Briton bore on his countenance and which impressed the foreigner more deeply than even his well-known valour and rugged insularity? Gone are all these, sunk in luxury, false refinement and greed of gold.

Where is the old contentment of which so much is said and which we hear the poets speak of in our earlier literature? Where is the humble and lowly cot? Nay, who would have a cot nowadays at any price, or if he had one, would he not carefully avoid all allusion to it, unless it were under the vague modern euphemism of my “place in the country”?

Thus we, alas! drift farther and farther from the grand old Roman principle, “*Esse quam videri*”; for that and nothing else is the true touchstone of taste. How shall we make the first step towards the comprehension of what goes to make Taste in its highest and noblest sense, when we have in our declension drifted so far from our ancient moorings that we care not any longer what becomes of man after death, and are content to trace our common origin with primeval apes, as if to justify our modern decay? We affect to despise the savages upon whom we prey, while not ashamed to beg from them our bread; we point to them with finger of scorn, thanking God we are not as they are, while indeed, had we eyes to see and ears to hear, we would understand

that those who dare to be what they are, rather than to seem what they are not, are more truly and nobly fulfilling the will of the Creator and the destiny of man than ourselves.

He is the true man who looks in the face of facts, who lifts his head to the Creator and challenges his fellow-men fairly and squarely to deny his manhood and deface God's effigy. Think of the fall from Socrates to Herbert Spencer, from Marcus Aurelius to Edward VII., from Plutarch to Rudyard Kipling, from Cato to Joe Chamberlain. Yet the Press assure us these are our prophets of to-day. It is only by contemplating the abyss which yawns between such as these that we realise that had a Darwin not arisen, we should have been bound to invent his theories to justify our own monkeyfication.

When looking upon the Masquerade, the monkey-like Masquerade of "Society," one may almost be allowed to doubt whether, indeed, man owes his origin to God or to an improved ascidian in common with our simian kinsmen !

Solomon said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Surely he must have had our present condition in view, since vanity in this life and the next, too, is the end-all and the be-all of our modern existence.

For who among us is content with his lot ? nay, who is there remaining now who believes in contentment ? or who that disbelieves that wealth is all in all ? Manhood, virtue, dignity, where are they now ? They may serve to gild a moral or adorn a tale ; but what place have they in real life nowadays ? The object of existence is now to acquire gold. I had almost said fame or gold, but it would be mere tautology. For one symbol will surely in these degenerate days serve for both, since it is not fame but vulgar notoriety which may be readily turned into gold, for which the soul of the modern really craves. In ancient Greece fame was rewarded with a laurel crown or a garland of myrtle. It was a sufficient reward for the highest excellence to which man could attain, to earn the branch of olive at the Panathenaic games. Think of the distance we have travelled from then to now ! How great is the measure of our inferiority ! Is there such a thing as fame nowadays in its pure, its noble, its loftier sense, of reward for a great deed in the love and respect of a free people ? No, call it as you will, it is not fame but

notoriety that men covet nowadays. Buy it by advertising with your gold if you have gold, and gather in the gold where you can if you have it not. In modern England wealth and fame are interchangeable, one and the same thing, like Bank-notes and gold; for who so closely watched and followed by interviewer, reporter, or the ragtag and bobtail of Society, as the latest millionaire from Klondyke or Chicago!

What chance would the heroes of Trafalgar or Waterloo stand against Rockefeller or Pierpont Morgan? Which of them would loom biggest in the public Press? which is kept more constantly before the public eye, or is more frequently cast up in the face of newspaper readers?

Yet such is fame in England! Manhood, Truth, and Faith are gone. Insincerity, Hypocrisy, and Imposture reign supreme.

Perhaps few things cause at first greater surprise to foreigners than the indifference, not to say ignorance, of the overwhelming majority of the upper classes to the artistic treasures of their own country. It is probable that not one in ten thousand men or women of what are commonly but ignorantly styled the cultivated classes, know, or care for, the existence of the treasures which are scattered like pearls before swine in rich profusion throughout the public museums and private collections of their own land.

Incredible as it may seem, the public indifference to the treasures contained in this country is such that no Englishman even in these days of literary speculation has ever ventured to catalogue or present them to an English audience. Nor is it the least likely, if so wild an attempt were made, that he would find either readers or subscribers. It has been left to Frenchmen and Germans to present to their more intellectual and appreciative countrymen the complete story of our varied national possessions in art ancient and modern, which, as we ought to blush to avow, are far better known abroad than at home.

I have before remarked the peculiarly British phase of imbecility, of belittling everything English while belauding all that is foreign; but let us not flatter ourselves that such a sentiment proceeds from undue modesty, for such a delusion would lead us far from the truth.

We have seen that Fashion, that truly British juggernaut, under whose weight we live, move, and have our being, and

beyond whose borders we might as well be dead and buried, has not only prescribed since the seventeenth century that every self-respecting fiddler shall have long black hair and be provided with a foreign name—as witness Signor Foli, the late-lamented “Basso” (mind! Basso, not “Bass,” for “Bass” suggests an Englishman, and would only fetch a shilling an hour in a country choir) who firmly believed that he would not have earned a twentieth part of his salary with his Irish name of Foley and minus his long black ringlets—but, as a natural consequence, we persist in disbelieving that anything good in Art can come from an English hand; with the result, that while we allow our best works to be carried off by foreigners, because we are too stupid to know whether they are masterpieces or not, until foreigners assure us of the fact, on the other hand we are totally unable to induce Parliament to preserve to the nation the best specimens of our own native art, although unlimited funds are readily obtainable when exorbitant sums are required to purchase the masterpieces of foreigners. Fashion has also prescribed that under pain of severe contempt and ostracism every male or female member of Society must be superficially acquainted with a few of the leading gems of the great foreign collections, such as the Venus of Milo, or the Madonna della Seggiola or the Apollo Belvedere, but as for the British Museum, National, Tate, Bethnal Green and Guildhall Galleries, and the endless gems that sparkle unseen in our public and private collections, laugh! it makes the aristocratic “gorge rise” to think of rubbing shoulders with frowsy workmen’s wives, in any less fashionable purlieus than those of the Royal Academy or Grosvenor Gallery. And here the observant foreigner opens his eyes more than ever and exclaims, “But when you see our Saloon and our Expositions you always say, when you see what you call ‘zee nude,’ ‘How shocking! How very French!’—but when I come to the Royal Academy I peer among many pictures which I think to be ‘omelettes aux fines herbes,’ but which are said to be the finest creations of the decorative school, also I see others which I think to be dirty palettes, and I am told that these are the finest samples of the impressionist school—and yet you complain of our nudities, as you call them, which make the British maiden to blush, and the young miss to cast down her eyes in the foreign

saloons! but I see here you have in the most prominent places of your Royal Academy not only these things, but also painters' models entirely undraped without even the excuse of Art to explain them. How is this?"

These and many other conundrums have frequently been put before me by my foreign friends and seriously "gravel me" as Shakespeare says. Assuredly I have done my best for my fellow-countrymen to bolster up their cause by railing at the incapacity and folly of the so-called Hanging Committee—who if I were a despot would certainly change their style from "hanging" into "hanged"—not only for the reasons above mentioned, but because they appear so grossly and unfeignedly to favour their own associates and friends, that the so-called hanging is invariably conducted more by favour than merit. Indeed, so desirous are these gentlemen to please the big wigs of their Association, that they have been known to fill up the empty places kept for R.A.'s with studies of their "models" and similar trash (not always conspicuous for their artistic value or intrinsic decency) when the above honourable gentlemen have not found time to complete the number of pictures with which they had originally intended to grace the Academic walls.

Here once more we find an admirable field for British hypocrisy to work its wicked will. Whenever letters appear from astonished British matrons who declare themselves to be painfully compelled to protest against the deplorable prevalence of nudities, where nudity and nothing more is the pretext for their presentation—it is amusing to listen to the indignant replies (almost invariably under false names) which are elicited from the pseudo-artistic fraternity. Nothing can be more natural than their virtuous indignation, their unfeigned horror at "the want of artistic feeling," "the Philistinism," the "fear of Mrs. Grundy," and above all, the "deplorable want of Taste" which afflicts British Society in general and the middle classes who have inherited the taint of Puritanism in particular! It is needless to say that such contributions are inevitably written by the subjects of the attack, usually with the full knowledge of the editor. Nevertheless, such shams, involving a deliberate denial of the first elements of truth and justice and the boasted securities of a Free Press, are nearly always "more Britannico,"

readily acquiesced in by the reading public as the fitting reward of indignant virtue at the hands of a canting generation.

Only the most patient, not to say the stupidest of newspaper readers, can be hoodwinked by or tolerate for any length of time such deliberate and organized falsification of truth and the legitimate uses of the Press without publicly protesting against the hypocrisy which defends ignoble actions by an appeal to a false ideal; or endure an exhibition of Cant, which seeks to defend miserable daubs or inartistic naked studies, whose only excuse for being produced at all is that nakedness in itself to many minds offers such attraction as to stimulate commercial activity, the whole being dignified and silvered over with the pretence of a taste and artistic merit which all concerned know full well to be non-existent. For if we are doomed to submit to a free and unfettered Press unhampered by official criticism, fair play and fair treatment for all, a free and open access to its columns by all those who have a right to enforce or a wrong to be redressed, should be jealously guarded as the highest security of morality; while if interest, or the predominance of political, commercial, or class influence, practically debar the public from the enjoyment of its undoubted rights, it is absolutely necessary that the newspaper should be above all suspicion of bribery, or what is much the same, of being controlled in the interest of certain opinions, political views or (as happens in the meaner sort) some particular branch of industry.

Finally, I submit that none but a stupid people with an immense majority of stupid readers would tolerate in the midst of what they constantly call a free people, such an anomaly as that correspondents should be permitted to write to the papers upon personal or contentious subjects, or still more, answers to the same, over anonymous signatures; since the essence of the honourable conduct of a newspaper and of the censorship of the public in its highest and truest sense can only be maintained by the good faith of the editor as well as that of his contributors being entirely above suspicion; nor is it worthy of a nation who prides itself upon fair play to allow secretly bribed literary assassins to stab in the back, or attack under false colours, those who resort to the Press as to an open tribunal to seek the verdict of their fellow-countrymen.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOCIETY

FROM journalistic hypocrisy and blackmail the transition is easy and simple to the ways of Society. First, what is Society? It is an invention of the fertile brain of Journalism—"that manufactory of false information," as Bismarck used to call it—and few inventions there are that have brought more grist to its mill.

No other civilised people but the free and independent citizens of the democracies of England and the United States have deliberately placed themselves at the mercy of a devouring monster, whom they are proud to feed upon their own flesh and blood, content to divide between the journalists and the lawyers that allegiance which they so stoutly deny, and at whose shrine they pay such persistent homage.

In all other lands "Society" has no more recondite meaning than "Company," that is, an aggregation of persons united for any common purpose. When a foreigner of any kind says that he has been in Society, or that he is very fond of Society, he simply means that he is a sociable individual, or that he has been entertaining or been entertained by certain of his friends. Or if it were remarked in his presence that English Society was setting its face against late dinners or abandoning "Bridge," it would be at once a natural question to inquire in what circles such a disposition was displayed, whether in Court, general, legal, financial, or political circles. Such an expression as "Society" to denote any particular set of people would be, and is, from the nature of things to the educated mind—unperverted by the traditions and jargon of a scheming Press—entirely senseless and preposterous.

It seems that the Yankee newspaper proprietors, with that acuteness which distinguishes the American journalist wherever there is money to be made, shortly after the Civil War made the discovery that their fellow-countrymen so far from being

imbued with democratic sentiments in all that concerns the social side of existence, retained with their Anglo-Saxon blood so deep a taint of that "snobbery," or love of empty show combined with an exaggerated respect for rank which has been aptly termed "flunkeyism," that it only required the torch of competition and advertisement to set alight a train which would not only confer great pecuniary benefit upon the rapidly-growing newspapers which were springing up in every village of the States by supplying them with an endless fund of current gossip, but go far also towards taking the place of the Court anecdotes and descriptions of Court functions which are the staple currency of Continental Gazettes. They could not but observe that fortunes were rapidly increasing, that there was a tendency in some circles to establish a kind of "Aristocracy of settlement," graded according to the date of arrival, and that the descendants of the old Dutch colonists, if not respected by the latter English arrivals, were beginning to plume themselves upon the term of "Knickerbocker," which had been applied to them in derision by their Anglo-Saxon successors. With infinite skill, therefore, the Boston papers set themselves to outrage the New Yorkers by ridiculing the "Knickerbocker" antiquity on which the old Dutch families rested their aristocratic pretensions, while the New Yorkers gibed at the descendants of the Puritan fathers, and ridiculed the æsthetic habits of the descendants of the families who escaped in the historic *Mayflower*. Finally, Maryland, not to be behind, retaliated by putting forward the pretensions to a still earlier and more definite pedigree of her own original settlers, many of whom could trace descent to Cavalier families of high note and antiquity. To such an extent was this carried, that it was a common joke when I first visited America that one-half of Virginia claimed descent from the romantic union of Tom Smith and Miss Pocahontas, and the rest from Louis Fairfax, to whom the King had given the Winter-Hoek.

Yet another mushroom aristocracy rose up to combat the pretensions of the preceding four in the descendants of the "Signers of Independence," and I have myself a distinct recollection of the awe-stricken voice with which a charming old lady of Baltimore presented me to an individual—who shall be



nameless—whom she announced as an illustrious descendant on both sides, of a “Signer of the Independence!”

Already in the sixties a flourishing trade had been set up by these ingenious means of advertisement and counter-advertisement; each pork-butcher’s wife rushing to communicate her social doings and her latest hundred-thousand-dollar-purchase of diamonds to the purveyors of the local press wherewith to buy herself the notoriety for which her soul thirsted.

Action followed reaction. As in England we notoriously love a lord, the same fever in our blood carried over to America was easily fanned by an artful Press into a genuine yearning to hear and read how “Mrs. Washington Buggins has appeared at the Philharmonic with the largest tiara hitherto seen in New York,” or “Mrs. Silas F. Vandunk made a sensation in Broadway by appearing in a sleigh drawn by thirteen Spanish mules, with niggers on zebras for outriders,” etc. Still they were not happy. They had no Court to cluster round, nor titles to define their rank, nor authorised table of precedence, so that your millionairess, while free as air “to go one better,” and so outshine her neighbour in vulgar ostentation if she had but the dollars to do it with, would nevertheless repine that the Press should report the doings of a newly-enriched and uneducated pork-butcher’s wife in the same paragraph with her own. She had thus no resource left but to insist upon her qualifications being described at the fullest length, such as being the great grand-daughter by the mother’s side, or the fourth cousin by the father’s side, of a reputed “early Dutch settler,” or a “Signer of Independence.” Failing facts, some such fable as fills the pages of Burke’s genealogies would be concocted, and the thing was done.

Seizing upon this as a pretext for an aristocratic assumption of Privilege, the newspapers commenced to refer to the members of certain party-and-ball-going assemblies in New York and Philadelphia, consisting of some three or four hundred members, as “The Three Hundred” or “Four Hundred,” as the case might be. It was naturally sufficient for those who were not in these greatly advertised clubs or cliques, to ardently sigh for admission, with the result that in a short time these assemblies or cliques of friends who associated for social purposes, were referred to in newspapers as the “Society” of Philadelphia or

New York or Boston. Finally, the term "Society" was used alone, and tenaciously adhered to as if it were some secret or sacred circle or assembly to which none but adepts had a right of access.

As New York and the other leading towns enlarged their borders, and new millionaires from the East flocked thither to build their brown-stone houses and their galleries in Fifth Avenue, stuffed with foreign pictures, where they could best attract attention by their profusion and extravagance, the millionaire of yesterday became the aristocrat of to-day, and the rivalry waxed hot and furious as to who could exceed his fellow in attracting public attention by his whimsicality or ostentatious profusion. Each successive effort of the newest millionaire to outbid the millionaire of yesterday by the very latest freak of extravagance that ingenuity could devise, or vulgarity suggest, produced a fresh newspaper "record," which, exciting in its turn a sporting interest in the reading public, resulted in a large portion of the daily press devoting an ever-increasing share of its columns to the imbecile doings of rival competitors for the honours of social notoriety.

Such is the condition of Press-made "Society" in the United States. Now let us turn to England and see how things were managed there in order to bring us up to the trans-Atlantic level, and to drill us into the same subjection to the omnipotent Press by means of the same manœuvres used to level up the pork-packers of the West with the "Knickerbockers" and "Signers of Independence" of the East.

The invention of "Society" as an entity or a defined aggregation of persons is as purely the invention of the Press in England as it is in America. Here as there, the Press came, saw, and conquered. Finding out that no money could be made out of individual members until a definite newspaper standard was established, the journalists were not slow to discover—with that fine nose for smelling out the prevailing weakness of their victims which even their bitterest enemies cannot refuse to acknowledge—that, by applying ordinary trade methods to the creation of a monopoly in a treasure which however little valued by its real possessors, might with careful manipulation be converted into a marketable commodity of rare value, succeeded

in setting up a market of which the Press would possess nearly all the profits along with three-quarters of the control.

I cannot trace any mention of English Society as an entity until towards the middle of last century. Thackeray, under the pretence of laying bare the inherent snobbery of the rich middle-classes, who, in his time, indeed, as in all others, have moved heaven and earth to be admitted into the superior class into which they consider their money entitles them to enter,—really laid bare his own soul when he depicts the wrongs and sorrows of other aspirants to social distinction, and in trenchant language portrays the griefs and pains of what he calls "Vanity Fair."

I have heard old fogeys say, that time was when Almacks and the Court list defined, more or less, the area of the Upper circles of the Metropolis. The phrase "London Society" marks the epoch, however, of the Press Creation in England.

I cannot say precisely at what date the Magazine of that name made its appearance, but it was certainly in vogue in the late sixties when I first "cut" lectures and shirked chapels, risking the penalty of "gating" and being "sent down" for the fitful joys of a day in town, with a London ball to finish up. Barring the name of that popular Magazine, which was certainly bestowed upon it by Thackeray, who, while alternately bemoaning his fate, and performing incredible feats of self-abasement in the attempt to obtain invitations to the houses of the great—in his "James de la Plush Papers," and other similar lamentations, which were supposed to be a correct representation of his own sentiments as to the inaccessibility of certain houses—besprinkled with bitter ridicule every one else who, like himself, desperately strove to "get there"—I cannot remember having ever used or heard the expression "Society" as representing a defined set or division of the human race, such as the Anglo-American Press of to-day have invented, and in these latter days to a great extent control.

One can easily imagine how three or four hundred families of New York or Philadelphia who have grown rich two or three generations earlier than the common herd around them, might arrogate to themselves the term of "Society" as the only Society in their eyes worth mentioning, and that they—by dint of

advertising themselves as such, by the usual trade methods in which they are born and nurtured—should create a factitious desire on the part of some hundred others not so included, whose habits and manners and education were not equal, in their judgment, to their own. But common sense would easily show the impossibility of so wild an undertaking, as either to wield the heterogeneous elements of which London social existence is composed, or compress its dissimilar and widely scattered parts into anything approaching a common organism. Far be it from me to deny that from the dawn of English History there were aboriginal "Snobs" of all classes, whose highest aspirations would consist in enlarging their acquaintances, by the elimination of the non-titled and the laborious cultivation of the titled, as far as their skill or audacity would permit, until, by the simple acquisition of a house in a fashionable quarter and the acquaintance of a few titled friends, they have by supreme efforts, or the possession of some special social talent or peculiarity, gained admission to the intimacy of the great, and even the companionship of dukes and "Royalties." Nor is it imaginable that the highly developed social Snob of Thackeray's day had not a long line of ancestry.

In a word "Society," as the phrase is used by the multiplied newspapers which exist upon it and feed by it, is utterly unmeaning to the alleged members of it whose position in the land is beyond the reach of cavil or jealousy. Such simply entertain their friends as and how they see fit, or if they have the misfortune to own large town houses—according to a system which has grown up of late years—are besieged and bombarded by their friends and their friends' friends for the privilege of displaying their girls to the largest obtainable audience, or for launching, possibly cash down, the latest enriched City-bounder in what he would possibly term High Society. But let us for an instant consider the materials out of which the ingenious pressman concocts what he calls Society. The Court contains about 100 members drawn from the richer classes, most of whose relatives are thereby drawn into and obtain invitations to the great Court functions. Add to this what has often been called "the upper ten thousand," but which, probably in these days, amounts with its adult relatives to more than a hundred

thousand—our democratic institutions gradually admitting ever-increasing numbers of enriched merchants, tradesmen and professional men into the ranks of the landowning classes—among which the six hundred peers, say a thousand baronets and knights and their families, and as many more belonging to the members of the Lower House—all of which are expected to present themselves and their children to Court. You have thus, say, 120,000 people who are all potential members of the Social firmament of which the throne is the centre, whose only homogeneity consists in their supposed right to a Court invitation, all of which collectively form in our present state of social chaos only a part of the vast recruiting ground from which the smartest or best-advertised fashionables, are and have been drawn.

Two things, as I have before hinted, have tended to decuple or perhaps centuple the ten thousand described as roughly representing the families and members of families who are expected to aspire to Court invitations and by inference to come up to town during the period of the Court ceremonies and functions, in order to be partakers of that inestimable blessing—and these are railway communication and rapid fortunes. For one fortune made in the provinces fifty years ago there are probably a hundred now. Railways have tended to bring to town the smaller and poorer members of, county families; and Free Trade, or at any rate its misapplication, and declining prices have contributed during the last twenty years to thin the ranks of the landowners who are wealthy enough to support a London establishment. The multiplication of railways causing greater inter-communication of classes gradually increased the association, commercially or otherwise, of the landed and commercial classes, and the waning fortunes of landowners have obliged its members to descend from the lofty pedestal of ancient superiority to earn an honest (or dishonest) penny by “going into the City.” It is surely unnecessary to point out that this process, freely translated, means selling name or rank in the highest market, and decoying the British snob into doubtful speculations through the glamour of a title or a well-known name, which process entails as a necessary consequence that My Lord, or Sir Harry, finds it necessary and convenient to extend

his hospitality to Snooks and Rosenbaum in order to stimulate their financial exertions on his behalf.

There came the opportunity for the Hebrew herd. When rents went down by one-half and prices had fallen to such a point that the rich landowner of forty years ago found little but his reputation of a rich man as possessing so many thousand acres with its accompanying obligation of being the subject of ever-rising demands, he was, naturally, forced to sell his town house and live in obscurity in a corner of his ancestral hall, happy if he could pay the interest due on his jointures, and brothers' or sisters' inheritances. This was the hour of triumph for Rosenbaum and Hartman, who lost no time to step into his shoes by the purchase of his mortgages and reversions. Not only were bargains thus secured in Grosvenor Square from magnates whose territory covered half a county, but "dukes and things" abounded in the Bankruptcy Gazette, while Rosenbaum & Co. waxed fatter and bigger as they swelled like bloated spiders upon the decay of the territorial aristocracy.

The old German saying of the Middle Ages was: "Jeder Graf hat seinen Jude" (each Count has his Jew); now the tune is changed in Merry England to "Each Jew has his Earl." And though Rebecca and her children are not, as a rule, fair to look on or "pleasant to meet," their tenacity and determination coupled with a marvellous skill in the arts of advertisement and combination, joined to the highly perfected Press machinery which they found ready to hand in the "70's" and exported wholesale from America, has enabled the Jewish-Yankee Press in our midst by the skilful manipulation of the term "Society," which they represent to be a lofty and soul-inspiring organism composed chiefly of dukes and themselves, to be a most effectual machine for pecuniary extortion as well as social exaltation. Sandwiching puff-seeking vulgarians between well-known magnates is a particularly profitable system. Let us take up any newspaper in proof of this. Angelica writes to the *World* as follows:—"The day being fine, many well-known faces were seen in New Bond Street. The Duchess of Three Stars and Mr. Jumblestein, the Duke of Threedashes and Mr. Stanley Buggins, were conspicuous by their faultless attire and the elegance of their equipages." Or Lady Sally Johnson (special correspondent

of the *Lady*) writes that "In the gayest throngs of the Park few shone more by their beauty, their elegance, and taste, than the Duchess of Two-sticks, and Miss Sarsaparilla Snooks, the lovely new débutante whose millionaire papa has just bought the Marquis of Dashes' magnificent mansion in Belgrave Square, and Mrs. Isaacs, too, in her well-known barouche, whose faultless attire bids fair to rival that of the Princess of Wales or Her Serene Highness of Krumpelbaumstein."

Nor must it be supposed that the competition is not just as warm on one side as the other. The Honourable Slingsby Jimjam is at least as anxious to attract the heavily-gilt glances of Miss Virginia Crumpet, only daughter of the senior partner of the great banking house of Grayfriars, as that pompous city magnate can possibly be to return the attentions of that amiable, if impecunious, sprig of nobility. Yet there can be no question that Miss Crumpet would give her eyes to be invited to the parties given by the Honourable S. Jimjam's mother, "whose house in Park Lane is the acknowledged centre" (*vide* daily press) "of all that is brightest, loveliest and noblest in the land," nor can she understand why she is not asked "everywhere" after having recently moved into a palace in Belgrave Square through the bankruptcy of the Marquis of Rackandruin, and caused herself to be largely advertised at great expense in the *World* and *Vanity Fair* as having lately bought and refurnished "Tumbledown Castle" from the Earl of Bagshaw—to say nothing of her sacrifice in abandoning Grayfriars and her own social circles with a readiness and completeness which does infinitely more credit to her head than her heart. And in spite of what she had read from childhood upwards in every shilling novel that had passed through her fair fingers about money being the passport to all Society and millionaires who had only to swoop down upon the West End for the entire aristocracy to fasten upon them tooth and nail, she soon finds out that without putting on the screw of financial manoeuvre and Press diplomacy, it is not an easy matter to attract any but the small and hungry fish into the gilt cages of parvenu hospitality. On the other hand it would not be difficult to strike a bargain, between the inordinate longing of Mrs. Frumpington Jones (the wife of the eminent furniture maker of Tinhammerton) to cross the threshold of the Marquis

of Scattercash, and the tactics pursued to obtain the coveted hand of Miss Amelia Frumpington Jones by the penniless younger son of that amiable if pompous Marquis. Nor is it a secret that by the judicious intermediary of certain impecunious members of the Press, who, under the pretence of interviewing the newly-arrived patentee of the latest process for destroying the sheep rot in Australia, have brought that somewhat overblown and h'less individual into such close and amicable relations with various male and female members of the penniless aristocracy, that having begun by buying a house in Grosvenor Square and furnishing a magnificent ball-room without a single acquaintance in the entire metropolis—by a judicious expenditure of cash certain mysterious negotiations were entered into by virtue of which in less than the space of a month he blossoms out in the *Morning Post* as “one of the most popular hosts of the London season,” and his ball-room, which has been filled in the flesh by the seediest of “Society” hangers-on, are freely rendered in print as “a goodly sprinkling of the fairest and noblest of England's sons and daughters.”

That these things are done in other lands there can be no doubt, but as far as my experience goes, it takes the Anglo-Saxon with his deep-seated commercial instincts to address himself to deliberate barter between wealth and birth, or rank and hard cash, in the cold-blooded vein with which he approaches his ordinary commercial transactions ; while to him alone is given that amazing and unfathomed depth of stupidity, by virtue of which he deliberately sacrifices his happiness, his associations, and the respect and esteem of his former friends, in order to purchase the adulations of the Press, by public advertisement of his profusion and expenditure upon objects which neither give himself pleasure, nor secure the esteem or friendship or indeed anything but the contempt, of the recipients of his favours.

Possibly the Anglo-Saxon conquering quality which has stood us in good stead by flood or field may account for the extraordinary desire of the new or self-made man to conquer by gold the company of the cultivated, the well-born or the titled, and that he seriously regards such acquisitions as the final aim and highest use to which wealth can be put.

In France since the Revolution (when the best families were



ruined and robbed of well nigh all they possessed except their titles) it is not uncommon for the impoverished noble to "manure his acres" at the sacrifice of his "blood" by an alliance with a well-dowered daughter of the trading classes, insomuch that a large number of the oldest families have by such misalliances become unable to show those quarterings which, before the Revolution, were considered essential to noble descent.

In England and Spain alone up to a comparatively recent date, through the absence of any serious revolution or civil disturbance, our ancient families were probably purer in descent than any in Europe. Since, however, the combined attacks of the Press and the concerted pressure of poverty within, and Judaism and Americanism from without, to say nothing of the corrosive action of the Press in degrading public opinion and lowering British nature to a vulgarity of disposition and a commercialism of feeling to which, at least, upper-class Englishmen till lately were strangers, it would seem that not only the highest names in England vie with each other in "manuring their lands" from American or any other sources, but even those who have not the motive of financial difficulty seem equally desirous of tainting their lineage by seeking their wives among the cosmopolitan hotels of the Riviera, or the ranks of the ballet and the music-hall.

At the present rate it is more than probable that there will not within fifty years remain a single "clean-bred" family in the British aristocracy. Nor will there assuredly be a family left which, according to Continental canons, is entitled to the honours of nobility, since the required minimum of sixteen quarterings of descent will soon become as rare as an auk's egg.

No doubt the entire Press will exclaim, "What of blood! Such notions are entirely exploded! They are only fit for the Middle Ages." To this I answer so far from that being the case, nothing more clearly appears in the view of modern science and research than that qualities not only descend through the blood from a man's predecessors, but, to go still further, no quality and no tendency can exist in a man except such as are possessed by or derived from his ancestors. It consequently follows that there is not only a sentimental, as used formerly to be supposed, but a

very real and positive advantage in descending from men who have for the greatest number of years exercised authority and occupied positions of trust and high responsibility, and who, by implication, have acquired habits and modes of thought superior to the common herd.

## CHAPTER XIX

### DECLINE OF GOOD SOCIETY

BESIDES offering a ridiculous spectacle of scrambling vulgarity and reckless ostentation only to be found (and paraded in the Press) of Anglo-Saxon lands, what must foreigners think of the open manner in which the mothers of our upper classes bring their girls to market in April or May when winter sports grow slack and the eligible youth of the nation flocks to the great flesh fair, differing from the flesh markets of Babylon of old only in this particular that marriage not slavery is the object—or of the extravagant profusion of the moneyed classes who desperately scramble for a footing in the houses of the great—or the calm indifference and contempt of the young men, usually in a marked minority to the girls at all social functions, and if rich, all too obviously aware of their consequence and importance as prizes in the matrimonial market—or the slavish obsequiousness of scheming mothers of marriageable daughters without beauty or expectations towards the noted ball-givers of the season—and the multifarious wiles and underhand manœuvres to obtain cards for the ball at Piccadilly House or the garden parties at Strawberry Lodge whose unfortunate owners are, after the English manner, expected to prove their title to give the best party of the season by showing that no one is able, without alarming risk to dress and person, to fight their way into its aristocratic precincts. “But,” cry their apologists, “what are we to do?” The young men will only come to town when there is no shooting and hunting. The more serious middle-aged with money and position are brought to town on Parliamentary and business errands as city guinea-pigs or courtiers, and these are the prizes of the matrimonial market to be fought and haggled and manœuvred for in the space of two months, with the full knowledge that the girls to be married outnumber the men who can afford to marry by eight or ten to one!

Again, the Continental critic, who regards social intercourse not only as a fine art and the outcome of the highest refinement and

cultivation, but also as an absorbing aim and occupation of his existence, freshly arrived in New York or London and flung into the whirlpool of what the Press advertise under the name of Society, is utterly at a loss to know whether to be more astounded at our vulgarity or to be scared with the almost crushing hospitality of his effusive entertainers: while in the secrecy of friendship or the recesses of his hearth and home, he inveighs against the utter stupidity of a nation who concentrate the social amusements and entertainments of a year into two months, and those the hottest and least pleasant of the year and least suitable for town life, who carry their commercial instincts so far as to make a business of pleasure, who entertain not so much their friends as their friends' friends, and, if they have a large house, are not unwilling to rake in from the highways and byways men and women whom they never saw before and hope never to see again with the thermometer at 100, in the desperate dread of *not* being crowded to suffocation, lest the Press should say that the rooms were thinly tenanted, or lest it should be whispered abroad that most of the eligible dancers and best-dressed women crowded to Lady B.'s over the way. Nor can he imagine why these strange English, who profess to love dancing, regard no ball as successful unless the crowd is so great as to make dancing impossible! The reason is not far to seek. Among the upper ten probably not more than a couple of hundred houses in Mayfair and its purlieus are suitable for social entertainment. These are hemmed in and surrounded by three or four thousand other abodes of the "newly enriched," whose occupiers ever press upon the flanks of the favoured few, hoping by continual Press mentions, joined to the untiring efforts of their male belongings in city office and grimy eastward dens, to induce by cunning pretence or skilful manœuvres their aristocratic acquaintances, who are lured to their haunts by greed of gold, to extend the coveted boon of social intimacy to their wives and families.

Truth to tell, there is nothing mysterious in that paradise tenanted with the houris of journalistic invention. Whatever it may sound like at a distance when travestied by the super-abundant fertility of the penny-a-liner imagination in novel or Society paper, looked at from inside nothing can be more prosaic,

more commercial, more unrefined, in short, more truly British, than our London "Society" during a London season. Given that Court and Parliament, its Press, and "hangers on" only remain in town during the few months of Parliament session and Court festivities, and that they, and possibly two thousand other families of similar standing possessing London houses are all equally anxious to present their own or their nearest relatives' daughters at Court and secure them the best chances in the matrimonial market; and given, moreover, four or five thousand of their less fortunate relatives, friends without town houses, who come up for a month or two to stay in lodgings or hotels, who are equally desirous of showing their daughters without being put to the expense of entertaining in return; granted, too, that alongside and intermixed with these are thousands of other families whose members, especially the feminine part thereof, yearn to realize the dream of inclusion within the mysterious portals of the aforesaid paradise for which alone they have been tempted to wander westward, and are prepared, nay burning, to spend thousands to obtain; add to this an overwhelming desire at all price and at any hazard to show the aforesaid numerous fledglings to the greatest advantage, and the ever-increasing numbers of landed families who from waning rents and ever-growing taxation are compelled to shut up their town houses, or at any rate are unable to entertain—and it may easily be guessed that it only requires the intervention of the magic hand of the journalist and the Press-invented go-between, a broken-down sprig of nobility, male or female, to light the train and bring about the greatly desired but somewhat delicate and mysterious negotiation by which large sums of money are wont to pass westwards, to enable Mrs. Reuben Finkestein or Mrs. Plantagenet-Thompson to gratify her social ambition by spending untold thousands in entertaining a choice selection of the hungry aristocrats aforesaid, who, however content to meet their friends at *her* house at *her* own expense, use every art and strategy to avoid her acquaintance. There's the rub. For, while those who can afford to be independent and are not overburdened with maternal cares and pressing debts are secure in the possession of as many cards to their own friends' entertainments as they can possibly desire, the ragged fringe of

impecunious younger sons and half-pay colonels and maiden aunts cast hungry glances at the flesh-pots of Egypt, and, while joining with their richer relatives in ridiculing the senseless pretensions of the new-comers, secretly allow themselves to be bribed into frequenting their society by the allurements of financial and commercial assistance and bounteous hospitality, or the prospect of a well-dowered wife.

Not content with this, just as the nobles of Louis the Sixteenth's early reign eagerly devoured the pages of Rousseau and Diderot which carried the record of their own shame, the English aristocracy since the early 70's, deliberately, with a simplicity which would be touching were it not the prelude and sign of the imbecility which precedes destruction, encourage every dirty rag, and cherish every vile caricaturist in *Vanity Fair* or other illustrated paper, to hold up to contempt and execration all that had hitherto been most respected and esteemed about Court or Throne. By these means the democratic Press has been able to obtain a similar footing to that which it has acquired in the United States, while the degradation of English social habits and the trumpeting abroad of its internal weaknesses, and the pertinacious defamation of its members through newspaper or novel for the delectation of the lowest classes, have placed in journalistic hands a power over England's social destinies which, combined with the skilful adaptation of blackmail, not only lower the upper strata of the nation in the eyes of the reading public, but cannot fail to re-act upon the very foundations of our social stability.

## CHAPTER XX

### OUR NOBILITY

THE very notion of nobility, probably the earliest abstract idea that impresses itself upon the human mind and finds its reflection in every cultivated country of the world from all time, is to the Briton entirely unfamiliar. Not as in other lands, a man whose ancestors have held high places and position for centuries or otherwise identified themselves with the history of their country is called noble, but, forsooth, the members of his hereditary legislature, of whom nineteen out of twenty, being as they are, collected from the rag and tag of successful politics—brewing, banking, scheming, share-mongering, and financial interests, differ as much from the idea and substance of nobility as the wildest imagination can conceive.

It is not easy to see how the term "noble" came to be thus applied at all. The very origin of the word seems to be lost to us, and Englishmen have come to think as they do of all their institutions, however preposterous, that Providence has placed them upon a separate ledge and endowed them with a separate understanding, superior no doubt to all others, and that their so-called insularity is an effect approaching predestination devised from all time by an all-wise Providence to differentiate Britons from the common herd.

Before the Normans came over, there seems no doubt that the idea of nobility was entirely foreign to our rude Saxon forefathers. We know that there was a certain favoured class of courtiers somewhat resembling the "mignons" or "companions" of the later French kings, acting partly as councillors and partly as hostages, and that the greater landowners were raised to a similar rank and called Thanes by either the possession of wide lands or, if in trade, of sufficient funded capital to maintain "a hall, a barn, a chapel and a bell." Some few raised to high office as representatives of the king in the several counties were called Yealdermen, the parent of the modern earl, while all the rest below were confounded in the term "ceorl" or "churl," with the exception of those who were in absolute servitude or

attached as chattels to be bought and sold with the land they tilled.

Not having a word resembling noble, and probably not being sufficiently advanced or civilized to appreciate the term, nor language to express it, our Saxon forefathers scarcely realized the essential distinctions conveyed by the various degrees of "noble" or "gentle," "free" and "serf." To them it was all in all to be free; and in their rude Saxon terminology and their rude common sense careless of fine distinctions or unable to comprehend them, they were still well able to distinguish between a man who had his rights under common law and the unhappy wight who could be bought and sold like cattle at a fair. Nor was the distinction clearly defined between the military and the higher feudal ranks. Generally speaking, the Norman who held a fee or part of a fee was equally designated as of gentle blood along with the noblest in the realm, the term "noble" being usually reserved as a complimentary adjective for the higher ranks of the clergy and King's Council. When, however, the Parliament came into being and the King's Council merged, or, rather, were crystallised into the king's tenants or chief landowners being called up from every county to serve the king in his council (by summons); in short, when the House of Lords was first called up by Henry the Third, no title of nobility was conferred upon that body as a whole, and thereafter, as before, the entire aristocracy of the nation consisted of the higher and lower nobility; the higher consisting of the dukes and earls, barons, abbots, and bishops, as the case throughout the continent, while the lower comprised the rest of the landowners holding directly of the king under military tenure.

It may be interesting here to give some idea of what still remains of our ancient nobility, judged by the standard of civilisation throughout Europe. Unlike the rest of Europe, England (alone with Spain) unmoved by any serious convulsion or political upheaval, should possess as pure a nobility as any country in Europe; but from various causes, among which not the least is the new-found disregard or contempt of blood, and the consequent frequency of plebeian marriages, our English aristocracy is probably the least pure of any continental race in spite of the preposterous revival of "female peerages" granted



to individuals at an early date and descending to general heirs, by which a continual succession, or reproduction rather, of an ancient peerage may descend to the most plebeian blood, and being practically indestructible may be said to defy all efflux of time. Moreover, the enormous destruction of the aristocracy during the bloody Wars of the Roses and the equally rapacious exactions of the Tudor monarchs, together with the practice introduced from Scotland by James I. of selling peerages to the highest bidder, combined with the continual and continuous renovation of its ranks in accordance with political exigencies, have produced the singular phenomenon that only a twentieth of the class to which the technical term of nobility is exclusively applied is really noble in common sense, fact, reason, or analogy. Senators they are, as of their office, or, if you will, hereditary legislators, but noblemen in no sense that has ever been known to any nation modern or ancient.

According to Mr. Shirley, whose study and researches in historical genealogy have met with wide acceptance among serious genealogists—no aristocracy is of a more mushroom description than our own. While numberless French, Spanish, and Italian families can trace their descent to heroes of the ninth and tenth centuries, scarce any in England can trace a clear male descent even to any of our Norman invaders, while as for our reputed Saxon families, their histories and traditions as set down in Burke are regarded by the critical genealogists of the day as pure and simple myths.

Mr. Shirley finds less than three hundred families that descend from authentic English families of position and landed possession, so lately as the Battle of Bosworth. While if we extract from these what may be called the truest nobility or aristocracy of the land, by selecting those families whose ancestors undoubtedly existed and contributed to lift the glory and power of England to the highest point to which it has ever attained, namely, in 1350, under Edward III., barely two hundred can be discovered whose male ancestors still survive and have continued to flourish up to this day. It is, therefore, a fact that cannot be doubted that adopting the best authorities in genealogy (which is far from an exact science) the aristocracy or true nobility of England do not exceed two hundred families (and these only dating from early

Plantagenet days, that is about six hundred years) fifty of which having adhered to the ancient faith through fair weather or foul, are for the most part reduced by their fidelity to a mere shadow of their former wealth and greatness.

This brief sketch will serve to illustrate the mushroom character of our real aristocracy; and when we have added the fact that of the old feudal nobility scarce half a dozen remain who can trace their titles in male descent earlier than Henry the Eighth, it will be easily seen how deeply we differ from all other nations in the character, constitution, and value of our aristocracy, and while they may serve to afford an explanation, or an extenuation to be more exact, of the extraordinary tricks that we are represented to play according to our Press—certainly do not contribute to our good fame, or the respect of foreign nations. Nor does it tend to increase their estimation when they are assured by the critical school of genealogists that “Burke” is a tissue of frauds, and the holders of our most aristocratic names are common vulgar impostors.

Now, if we were frankly to realise our true situation and acknowledge that from a rough, straightforward, soldierly people, who have risen by the sword and foreign conquest to a position utterly disproportionate to our numbers and size, until in Edward the Third's time we overran France, the most powerful and richest nation on the earth, slaughtering her chivalry like sheep, bringing her powerful king to our knees, and dictating terms, while the gallant Black Prince brought back to London and locked up the kings of Scotland, France and Cyprus, and held them to ransom—we have come to be a thoroughly commercial nation, with a strong dash of the corsair, who seize all the bare spots of the earth and conquer all the nations that we conveniently can, subjecting them to our rule and compelling them to buy our cottons and hardware at the sword's point, we should still make a brave show and play the part of a strong, blunt nation, proud, and bold, and self-sufficing as of old; but for that we must lay our shoulders to the wheel, purge away our luxurious tendencies, inculcate at home and abroad a policy of retrenchment and improved administration, good laws, and a strong central government. For without this we cannot expect mercy from the nations who howl about our

footsteps, and who, if not deterred by our powerful navy, would tear us in pieces as Poland was torn in pieces by the great Continental powers scarce two hundred years ago!

Intoxicated with our wealth, our extraordinary advantages, mines and minerals, and the rapid expansion of mechanical industry, steam, railways, and electricity, we resemble a forced peach pushed hastily to maturity, unwholesome, puffed up, and rotten at the core, as we turn a bloated face to the nations, crying, "Which of you is like unto us?" "The highest treasures that human art and industry can produce are at our feet! What artist, what writer, what poet, what musician, what minister to human pleasures, but must come to London to pour his treasures in our laps, and seek those rewards which only Englishmen are willing or able to bestow!"

Aye! forsooth, lavish extravagance, profusion, luxury, barbaric display, that and much more of the kind can be seen in London and New York as well or better than in any other part of the world! But is it not exotic, forced, foreign, and unnatural? Do we not, every one of us, feel that there is an air of unreality, of sham, about our boasted civilisation? Does any Englishman or woman whose house is converted into a bric-à-brac shop *really* desire to lift themselves by the contemplation of art treasures into the highest æsthetic planes? Do they surround themselves with beautiful objects and pour their wealth into the foreigners' lap in order to beautify their homes, or to make their life purer, sweeter, and more worthy of cultivated beings?

It is said that the exception proves the rule. No doubt there are exceptions, but will any one, however superficial his acquaintance with even the exterior of the English Babylon, believe that one in a thousand exists upon whom the business of a London season, with its mill-like round of noisy display and laborious dulness, confers anything approaching to contentment or satisfaction? Compare the faces that file past in the crowded ranks of the Ladies' Mile, Rotten Row, or the Serpentine, with a similar crowd enjoying a bank-holiday or by the side of a race-course! Can sadder faces be seen anywhere than those who crowd the boxes of the opera, theatres, and stalls, plastered with diamonds, coated with paint, stiffened out with all the art of the milliner and perfumer, or gasping at the top of a staircase while

the stream of perspiring guests swarm up, and over, and around, or fighting for their own turn in a stand-up feed at a Court buffet, or storming a crowded ball supper. Or see the ladies three and six deep in a London ball-room with the thermometer at a hundred and a cold draught on their bare shoulders from the open windows, or struggling in turn to obtain a breath of fresh air like the victims of the Black Hole of Calcutta! Can a sadder spectacle be seen, or more piteous and disappointed faces be discovered, upon the wide earth than among a fashionable London crowd tossed to and fro in the social whirlpool?

Nor can it be supposed that out of thousands who spend the bright, sunny June and July days in such pitiful style there are any—but the very young boys and girls—who either enjoy or pretend to enjoy the deadly mill-round of enforced pleasures which compose the routine of their existence. Why do they do it? *Because it "is the thing" to do!* How many Englishmen and women I have heard use this phrase in apology and pretext for partaking in the dismal business of pleasure of a London season! This it is which differentiates us from the foreigner. This it is that sets the English man and woman on a different pedestal from any other nation. This is the black spot of our nation and our character. We do foolish things—because *it is the thing* to do them!

Free and independent as we are in all else, in our social exhibition, as in every branch of social life, we are guided, not by reason or intelligence or even by what we want and wish to do, but by what "*it is the thing to do!*"

But I shall hear my readers exclaim, "Surely fashion is as powerful abroad as in London and New York. Yes, fashion as to the mere shape of a hat or the cut of a dress, but in all other respects there is more liberty in the little toe of any nation in the world than there is in the whole body of an Englishman or Englishwoman. If we are the freest people in the world and have taught true personal liberty to all the nations six hundred years ago, nevertheless, in all matters outside politics and government English men and women are the veriest slaves that the world ever saw."

From the earliest dawn of childhood it is always "This is the thing to do," or, "That is not the thing to do." From tottering

youth to palsied old age the cry is still the same, "This is the thing to do." It is never, "This is right or this is rational," but, "This is the thing to do." If we are not all the slaves of fashion, we are all the slaves of the "thing to do."

What is this mysterious "thing" that governs English men and women and makes slaves of them? Apparently public opinion, but what is public opinion but the combined ignorance and imbecility of a thousand paid scribblers who, for the most part, know nothing about what they are writing, and, in all cases, write to order and not according to truth or conviction? And yet this is the tyrant which "makes cowards of us all." Under a former article I have alluded to the scorn of foreigners at our slavishness of opinion. One of our weaknesses is to intrench ourselves upon the aggregate opinion set forth in the newspapers. It is not what we think, but what the *Times* or *Morning Post* says or thinks. No English man or woman ventures an opinion of their own. Hence in great measure arises the absence of taste. For taste supposes in the first place sufficient knowledge of, and next due consideration of the grounds upon which all actions, beautiful and noble, and great, are founded. "Society" in the main has now become no longer a social intercourse but a tedious and expensive system of self-advertisement. Even our country pleasures, once so dear to Englishmen and so distinguishing a mark of the quiet, unostentatious refinement of which the cultivated Englishwoman used to be (and still is, when she can be found) an admirable example, has given way to the mania for self-advertisement. Where the magnates of fifty years ago could entertain their friends and conciliate their tenantry during the whole of the shooting season by showing moderate sport with the natural produce of their covers, they must now show immoderate sport by killing thousands in a few days reared at enormous expense in order to gratify their love of self-advertisement by making a "record" bag. *They* do not enjoy it, their friends do not enjoy it, but the newspapers *do* enjoy it, for they are doubly repaid, first, by the snob who entertains, and, secondly, by the snobs who devour the elaborate details served up, describing how His Serene Transparency The Grand Duke of Schinkenund-Krautenburg honoured the Marquis

of Tinkerton with his presence at his annual battue and succeeded in making the record bag for the county of, etc., etc.

Nor is it otherwise with other English sports. Cricket, golf, lawn tennis, football, have each been successively seized by the omnivorous Press, swallowed up and marked for its own.

Just as the devotees of Juggernaut bow down and esteem it a favour to be rolled over and crushed, so we free and independent Britons kiss the hand that smites us and slavishly bow down before the Juggernaut of the Press which makes willing puppets of us all.

Nor does the tyranny of the Press stop here. From recording social events it is only a step to regulate them ; from regulating another step to imposing them, from imposing them the transition is easy to blackmail unless their orders are complied with. And yet so blind and stupid are we that we never get upon our legs at banquet hall or public meeting without thanking Providence and the Press for the blessings showered down upon us by what may well be called in sober earnest, the Tiers État, or Third Power in the State.

Your country magnates are not allowed to "shoot" too long—for the reading public would complain and the Press feel the pinch. Nor must they tarry too long at their country seats, or the public would be cheated out of the news that they had gone to Norway in their yacht, or shot grouse in Scotland, or electrified the Riviera by the multiplicity of their costumes or the expensiveness of their diamonds. The rich and high-placed—along with the flunkey train of ragtag and bobtail which jackal-like hang upon their flanks trusting to pull down a Duke at Monte Carlo or scrape an acquaintance with a Duchess at Homburg—are alike hurried by the Press from place to place throughout the livelong year under the terrible threat that if they do not comply with newspaper orders, they will be denounced by the Society papers as no longer fashionable or as falling behind the times, or, worse still, as not knowing what is the "thing to do."

If all this applies to the fashionable great, the Press tyranny exercised over them is as nothing when compared with that exercised over the creations of their own hands—the "nouveaux riches," whose very existence hangs upon their breath—or rather ink ! These are usually described as the "smart set," since their

sole excuse for existing, in the view of the Press who has invented them, is to furnish smart paragraphs for Society rags, about their latest feat of vulgar extravagance and folly.

If the young Duke of Runtherig "sports" a steam yacht fitted with nickel throughout, your latest African millionaire astonishes Cowes with a steam yacht plastered with silver. If the lovely Countess of Thingembob dazzles Covent Garden with the largest pearl necklace ever yet seen, the papers must instantly record that Mrs. Rosenbaum electrified the royal enclosure at Ascot by an exhibition of diamonds as big as walnuts round her ample waist. No damned soul of mediæval lore was ever tormented as these are. The reporter's eye is on them morning, noon, and night. They are his creatures, body and soul; he has made them and he farms them out to the best advantage. He tells them what to do and what not to do. If they do not supply copy, that is, produce some startling novelty surpassing what has been before conceived in folly, extravagance, or vulgarity, then woe to them. For as the Press has made them, it can unmake them by a stroke of the pen. They live in perpetual fear of dismissal. Ruled by a rod of iron, blackmail is their lot and anxiety their daily bread. Let them but kick ever so little or refuse to pay the price, the rein is tightened, and their reign is over. "Mrs. Montgomery Tompkins looked worn and haggard in the stalls," or, "Mr. Finsbury Jones' team at the Magazine yesterday showed a great falling off from last year," will soon appear in a Society paragraph. Or, worse than all, the word is passed round that his name shall be omitted at all parties or social functions, whereby the condemned one loses all zest or excuse for existence and sinks to rise no more, while the waters of "Society" close over him!

The suggestion has been seriously made by many thinking foreigners that we are too busy making money to stop to think. Can it be this that differentiates ourselves from all other nations? Was it of us the Prophet spoke when he said, "With desolation is the earth made desolate because there is no man that thinketh in his heart?"

Would that the evil only extended to the idle classes among the rich!

Just as action causes reaction and the manœuvres of the

Press recording at first the follies of the idle classes and their vagaries, constitute by proclamation and wide advertisement a code of laws which not even the boldest dares to infringe, begetting cowardice and folly in turn ; so the lower classes from the bottom to the top live not for themselves, nor dare to think for themselves, nor are they subject to their own laws : they are the very slaves of servile imitation of the class above them, the creatures and grovelling tools of custom and fashion.

Consider for an instant how the whole face of the country has been changed since English men and women have lost, mainly through American contact, the power and will to shape their own destinies, to wear the clothes suitable to their avocations, to avow themselves what they are, in short, to play the part of reasonable men and women.

#### INSINCERITY AND DISHONESTY

lie at the root of our social relations, and are themselves the root of a thousand ills that infest our body corporate.

Looking down the ages at the customs of the past from Saxon times, it will be seen that Englishmen of old, just as Continentals do now, and indeed all races except the Anglo-Saxon, dressed once in a manner suitable to their occupation. English men and women alone, during the last fifty years, growing ashamed of any distinctive dress announcing the profession or work they follow, have abandoned every attempt at adapting their dress to their work. Certainly, one would hardly recommend the dress of the Saxon herd to be resumed, however superior in point of wear and durability, to the one actually adopted for field work, consisting as it did in a single smock, of which the long Sussex smock is probably a relic. In winter they seem to have added a kind of puttie of rolled strips of cloth or hide, around their legs ; but the sandal of the past, exclusively confined (as in Ireland) to transit over rough roads, avoiding as it did the necessity of stockings (which are probably the most unsuitable, unhealthy, and insanitary invention of man), must convince the least observant of the long strides that England has made in the wrong direction.

It cannot therefore be from economy, or a nice research of the most suitable garment, or even a superior refinement which urges each class in succession not only to ape the one above



them, but crowning triumph of all—to leave no stone unturned in order that no distinction may be discernible between the dress of the highest and the lowest. Indeed a certain revulsion has set in as our democracy wears on, until the very names of class distinction have been reversed and the tendency of dress is rather for the highest and richest to assume the simplicity that once belonged to the working classes. Just as duchesses speak in these days of each other as women, since their washerwomen refer to each other as ladies (clearly an Anglo-Saxon weakness, seeing that it is carried to its highest extent by our Anglo-Saxon relatives), so the sporting peer is frequently attired in a costume that would assuredly give greatest ease and freedom to the working man, and as a matter of fact was the ordinary working attire of the 17th century boors. What can be prettier than the blue linsey home-made petticoat of the Scotch or English girl of fifty years ago, with the single upper garment or smock loosely tied about her waist, or in summer, linen, and in winter cloth-tippet about her neck and shoulders made from the wool or flax, raised on the farm in the long winter months! Or again the close-fitting frieze of the Irish peasant, who still in unfashionable or out-of-the-way places dons the same rational attire, his neat knee-breeches and home-made blue stockings with the Scotch or Irish “straw shoon” of days gone by, serving for indoor work, while the pattern, or clog, served for outside household duties. All over England, Scotland and Ireland, even in the remotest mountain villages of Wales we see now the same cheap, ill-made, ill-fitting jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, only differing from those of a peer in quality and durability.

The same may be said of domestic servants, who in the vain attempt to conceal their occupation, must needs dress at home as near as possible like their mistresses, and when they go abroad array themselves with “cheap and nasty” finery in as close an imitation to a duchess’s daughter as can be attained at a moderate cost, with the result that their wages are eaten up in cheap and tawdry finery which the first shower destroys, and which even when new are but a sham and a fraud.

Few sights are more admired by the English traveller in foreign parts than the neat and graceful costume of the local peasantry, or even the tidy dress of the French “grisette” or

“bonne” with their distinctive caps or kerchiefs announcing their various occupations.

Nor is it only in the article of clothes that this British insincerity and dishonesty is apparent, which cannot but react fatally upon the character of the people. Instead of the suitable food consumed by the poorer classes fifty years ago throughout Great Britain, we have the universal white bread, out of which all the strength and substance has been winnowed for the sake of brown bread and patent foods, till nothing but the starch remains; yet this is eagerly demanded and insisted upon by the poorest classes of our benighted land, for the sole reason that no imputation may be cast upon, or any difference discerned between, the bread of the richest and that of the poorest; and this, with weak tea of the worst description and cheap jams of doubtful origin, now form the staple diet of the working men and women of Great Britain and Ireland.

Far be it from me to insinuate that the evil is confined to the lower classes. The merchant shuns all allusion to his trade, the shopman blushes to speak of his shop. If compelled to confess, the former will own shamefacedly to his “business in the city,” making up for the degrading confession as far as may be by a pointed reference to his “place in the country,” which may be a cottage at £10 a year or a mansion at Brighton. The shopkeeper, not to lag behind—if a silversmith, calls himself a merchant in antique plate and diamonds, while the barber dubs himself an artist in hair or a wig merchant. All alike are ashamed of themselves and of each other.

Each class, instead of living according to their income, according to their reason, and according to their means, notoriously tend year by year more to live according to a standard external to themselves, in short, to copy the ways of those above them. As a natural consequence they ardently desire to enjoy the society, and ape the manners, habits, ideas, and language of those above them: not so much because it suits their pocket, or because they aspire to raise themselves in culture or refinement, but because they ardently desire to pass for members of a superior class to that in which they move, and still more ardently to be received into that society to which they do not naturally belong. Whether this is deeply seated in the Anglo-Saxon

character or is a growth of the last hundred years is a difficult matter to decide from the literature of the past. Personally, I incline to think that it is of comparatively modern creation, and that it flows directly from the "advertising competitions" and false standards set up by the contemporary Press. That every reasonable man should strive to lift himself beyond the station in which he is born is a natural and laudable ambition; but that such an ambition is perceptible here in a greater extent than in any other country I am greatly disposed to deny.

It cannot therefore be disputed that there is no nation in the world where every individual is more closely bound by a cast-iron code of conventionality affecting all classes alike and binding with still closer fetters the poorest as well as the richest, preventing all alike from following their own bent, taste, desire, and inclination, and constraining all alike to bow down before the "Thing to Do." This weakness not only cripples happiness and diminishes spheres of usefulness, but tends to develop in the highest degree that dulness of disposition and that want of gaiety and simplicity in act or speech, which are our leading characteristics.

Compare our working classes with their wives and families and the herd of clerks and shop-boys and shop-girls issuing forth to Hampstead Heath on an Easter Holiday, or deluging Southend or the Crystal Palace on a Bank Holiday—the workman and his substantial spouse armed with a ponderous basket out of which bulges a suspicious-looking bottle, whose waning contents at an early hour coincide with an increasing redness of feature, painfully foreshadowing the condition which awaits him before the shades of night close in,—the more hilarious but less bibulous clerk, in garments varying from the counterfeit presentment of an Oxonian athlete to that of a smart young man about town, with one or more shrill-voiced giggling female appendages whose noisy laughter and demonstrative manners seem expressly intended to attract the attention of the company in which they travel, and which singularly belie their fashionable if flimsy attire copied from the latest styles of Bond Street. Then turn to Vincennes or the Prado, or the slopes of Posilipo, and compare the simple workers of Paris, or Madrid, or Naples, disporting themselves on a feast day on the grass, arrayed in clean but simple garments distinguished alone by the exuberance of white linen, quietly

diverting themselves with innocent games, much chatter and unlimited gesticulation! Why is it that our British clerks and shop-girls and working men upon a Bank Holiday toil from early morn to catch a slow excursion train, and pass a painful day under a midsummer sun, seeking in vain a scrap of shade or shelter on a shingly beach or a sandy shore, instead of resting body and mind by a quiet picnic on the fascinating slopes of Hyde Park, like their foreign contemporaries? Simply because the railways bribe the Press to insist upon the glory and delight of a trip by train to a distant spot by the seaside from which thousands return cursing their lot and vowing they will never be gulled by the railways and newspaper puffs again—till the next time! Here again the same tyrants, Press and Fashion, govern all. Instead of doing what they like, people waste their money in uncertain "pleasures" at the bidding of an interested advertisement as well as in concession to public opinion, while they obtain neither rest, comfort, nor diversion, beyond that of being able to tell their friends that they have spent their Bank Holiday at Bournemouth or the Isle of Wight.

Look at the factory boys and girls of Lancashire. Instead of putting by money for a cotton strike, or a mill closed down, every penny is put by for the weekly or fortnightly "outing" to Blackpool or Isle of Man. During this fortnightly pandemonium their object is to spend the whole of their hard-earned yearly savings as quickly, as recklessly, and as vulgarly as possible in one continual round of noise, jostle, and endless, if inexpensive, "shows," which are thinly-disguised pretexts for plunder.

Thus it seems more than probable that the whole of their yearly savings are spent in simulating the fashionable dress of a superior station joined to the natural habits, language and manners of peasants, while from their deportment and appearance one can easily guess that they are more led by current fashion and practice than by their own inclinations, or they would surely not select for their yearly outing a laborious succession of physical exercises to which their mill work must seem light by comparison.

Few things cause greater marvel to the observant foreigner than the reckless expenditure of our working classes, for whom thousands of trains in holiday times are sent out of the London

stations on excursions to every part of the kingdom. "If they enjoy themselves" they say "the wonder would cease: one would merely call them extravagant and profuse in expenditure: but do they amuse themselves? they certainly do not look like it!" And until the bottle is empty, and numberless public-houses have been visited and the hubbub waxes fast and furious no signs of jollity or merriment can be detected to explain the mystery. This criticism may be correct or not; it is certainly a very prevalent one. Not being a conversational people, until the eating and drinking begins, there is not much signs of life in your average Briton of the working classes.

For it would seem that the Anglo-Saxon is still at that stage of social existence—and this applies quite as much to the highest classes as the lowest—when noise, pushing and jostling is far more congenial to male and female alike than the more refined equivalent in a higher stage of æsthetic development, as, for instance, music, the enjoyment of beautiful gardens—that "kif" which forms a sufficient delight to the more sentimental Oriental, or the "beārē" of the Italian; while the Frenchman or German of similar class, if he has any superfluous cash to spend, instead of an excursion to a sea place, which he neither looks at nor sits by, nor enjoys when he gets there, would unquestionably prefer a frugal "déjeuner à l'herbe" in the prettiest garden or park which he can reach, or, failing that, in any cornfield or wayside, or, greatly daring, rise to the extravagance of a sixpenny seat at the theatre or open-air concert.

Nothing is more remarkable than to watch our millions trooping into the great centres of resort by sea or land. If bound for the sea, do they ever go near it, sit by it, or look at it, or lounge upon the shingle and sands and watch the "sad sea waves"? Far from it. Their interests, their research and amusements, such as they are, are sought for precisely as in the London streets. If they take their nosebags with them, as the indignant publicans complain they do in these days with a disgusting frugality which they (the said publicans) cannot sufficiently condemn, they will probably sit and eat it by the shore; but if, as is usually the case, they depend upon local refreshments, it is almost certain that they will be found parading the streets with a pertinacity worthy of a higher cause till the last

hour of their stay, disporting themselves precisely as they would in Pimlico or Regent Street on a day out, and largely patronizing the local "pubs" and the cheap amusements which lie in wait for their cash at every turn.

#### OUR EMPTY PRETENSIONS.

As I have before hinted, an important consideration which weighs greatly with our foreign friends is purity of blood, as well as length of descent. This is carried to such an extent that numberless institutions upon the Continent are limited to such as can show sixteen or thirty-two quarterings as the case may be. Now, from an examination of many of our best pedigrees, it is extremely doubtful if there are any who can show even sixteen quarterings, from which it would appear that Englishmen present the singular paradox of coveting rank and respecting position, good blood, and length of pedigree—as far as my observation goes—beyond any other nation of the earth, while at the same time English men and women of rank and station regard no more the female side than King Cophetua when he married the beggar maid.

There seems to have been a certain prejudice regarding purity of blood and the disgrace of a base marriage as lately as the middle of the last century, but since that time, contrary to what might be supposed would follow from German influence and German ideas where strictness in this direction is carried to such an extent as to be ludicrous, your duke or baron of ancient lineage marries a penniless milkmaid, like Lord Huntingtower of the ballad, to say nothing of a well-dowered lass, of the meanest extraction, without calling forth the surprise of his friends or the jeers of his enemies. From this it follows that besides having an almost infinitesimal "Nobility" in its proper sense, consisting as I have before said of about one-twentieth of the House of Peers and a hundred or so other families besides, nearly all these have so besmirched their escutcheons by base marriages as to be excluded altogether according to the stricter Continental code.

Yet you may search a German, or French, or Italian paper through and through without a mention of how "Lady So-and-So filled her rooms with a distinguished assembly consisting of So-and-So and So-and-So," or "Mrs. Stanley Tompkins

once more repeated her delightful private theatricals which were the success of last season," etc., etc., still less do they cultivate newspapers devoted ostensibly to chronicling the doings of what they please to call Society, but which in reality, as I have above explained, are nothing but a gigantic fraud devised to induce foolish purchasers to hawk about a heap of twice-paid advertisements.

Nor is it as works of art that these singular productions of modern Press industry can find purchasers, consisting chiefly, as they do, of women in various attitudes and stages of undress, combined with an enormous variety of beautifully depicted "stays" and underclothing which for indelicacy bid fair to rival the disgusting productions which, from being tolerated abroad by too indulgent police regulations, are frequently a subject of reproach and complaint on the part of our fair compatriots.

Nowhere, however, is our national hypocrisy displayed more touchingly than at Monte Carlo, where we have all heard a thousand times the tenderest and most plaintive expressions of sorrow at the degradation of so lovely a scene by the frequency of suicides, and the shocking incitement to crime, with general discursions upon the immorality of foreigners and the horror with which English people regard these cesspools of iniquity! It certainly is a singular thing that the said cesspool is more frequented, and that probably more cash is there hazarded by Englishmen than any other nation; though, possibly, this may be ascribed to their fervid missionary inclinations which impel them to try what can be effected in the way of conversion by precept and example.

In further confirmation of this flagrant example of British cant I may say that I have been informed on the best authority that Ostend, which for many years has been greatly resorted to by English people of both sexes who continually declaimed against the iniquity of public gaming tables in that town through the medium of English and Belgian newspapers, has been entirely deserted by our compatriots since public gaming has ceased to be legally permitted. Perhaps a coincidence! but one that speaks volumes to the thinking mind! Whether this is again an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the foreigner or not is very difficult to say, but it exhibits in a striking light the tendency of

Englishmen to see specks in foreign eyes while they are utterly oblivious of the beam in their own, since if there is a vice to which English men and women are addicted in a higher degree than any other people on the earth—class with class, from the housemaid to the duchess, and the dustman to the duke—it is that same gambling, racing, or share speculating mania which pervades the entire community, invades every department of sport to such a degree that football and cricket, which are at present the most popular and engrossing sports of the lower classes, are fast vying with the racehorse as a betting agency, and day by day afford new harvests to the bookmakers and the inevitable Press.

If, therefore, the lower classes in England are liable to the charge of preferring the more primitive forms of enjoyment usually associated with the indulgence in excess of stimulants, such as tea and tobacco, whisky and beer, gambling and horse-racing, football and cricket matches, and by way of social diversions prefer noise and horseplay to quiet amusement or the pleasures of conversation—what are we to say of the classes above them, who profess to greater refinement, and, for the most part, are possessed of a higher degree of cultivation? For idiotic as is the average music-hall song, music, and dialogue, if our playwrights truly urge in excuse of their misdeeds that they do but write up to the public tastes, what are we to think of the upper classes whose plays year by year are not only patterned upon but actually made up from the inanities and witless productions of what is most inaptly called “variety entertainment,” apparently because of its imbecility or absence of humour?

It may be truly asserted that not one in a thousand either cares to listen to good music in England or does anything more than tolerate it. In the best society it is almost impossible to secure decent attention when a singer performs in a crowded drawing-room. The same may be witnessed at any opera-house on any night in the season. There is comparative silence during the performance of a principal solo on account of the risk that may be incurred of interruption or public interference, and similarly in private houses when the eye of the mistress of the house causes compunction in the breasts of the delinquents: but



that anyone should either desire to listen to good music or be deterred by good manners or consideration for the singer is a view of the case which rarely commends itself to the members of "English Society." Similarly at concerts and operas the greater part of the first act or division of the concert is entirely spoilt by the rustle of dresses and the incoming of late diners, whose last thought is to guard against the inconvenience and impoliteness of spoiling other people's pleasure, and hampering the course of the performance, by dining at an early hour; nor do they stay to the end of the performance if otherwise disposed—two infractions of ordinary politeness which are strongly resented by foreigners as entirely contrary to civilized habits and practice.

I distinctly recollect a friend of mine—whose first visit to Covent Garden, with an excellent company, had been looked forward to with some pleasure—informing me that the first half of the opera had been obscured by the ladies in arriving late passing to and fro in front of him, and the second spoilt by their premature departure.

Similarly, if English snobbery is obtrusively visible in the lower classes in their desire to frequent the society of those above them rather than their own, what are we to think of the educated classes in England where a perpetual scramble is apparent from bottom to top of the entire social edifice, every class and rank scheming to be asked to the houses of the class above them, or toadying party and ball givers with every conceivable act of abasement that the human imagination can devise, in order to thrust themselves where they are not wanted and obtain tickets for balls given by persons to whom they are not known, or manoeuvring to be introduced to people whose acquaintance they imagine to redound to their credit; while as for the all-pervading British mania to jostle, squeeze, press, crush, and crowd, the tendency is quite as strongly marked in the Court balls as in the Surrey theatre's pit or the crowded enclosure of a racecourse. Again, in the matter of appreciation of art in any form, or essential refinement, in the degree and measure of their education, the ostentatious vulgarity displayed by our gilded youth who systematically interlard their speech with musical comedy phrases and Americanisms and the last cant phrases of the

music-hall, the gutter or the racecourse—taken in conjunction with the introduction into the drawing-room of the lowest music-hall songs which are notoriously and obviously attended to and enjoyed in a far higher degree than good music by the “Upper Ten,”—any contrast between the highest and lowest classes in England must be admitted to show a very slender balance to the credit of the more favoured classes.

One hears a great deal about “kiss-in-the-ring” and hugging and squeezing in the kitchen, and the village green, and Hampstead Heath, and the barn dances’ of the Kentish hop-pickers, but when we see these transplanted into the ball-room of the rich and educated classes—what are we to think of a nation whose so-called Society is not content with culling their flowers of speech from the gutter and introducing them into their own fastidious mouths, but wearying of the graceful waltz and stately quadrille, and envious of the license and freedom of the kitchen and the ale-house, or the childish antics of the Southern nigger, eagerly import the latest vulgarity of the tap-room into the lancers, and substitute for the graceful mazurka or quadrille the barn dance of the scum of East London and the cake-walk of Louisiana cotton-fields?

What must foreigners think of a nation, whose Upper Classes (if the term can be properly applied to those who live in the best houses and spend most money) take their language from the music-hall, their slang from the gutters of New York and London, teach their sons and daughters the imbecile, when not indelicate, dances of the theatre and music-hall, and the songs of the street? abandoning formality, politeness of forms and speech and manner to the lower classes, adopting free-and-easy impudence for their standard of manners, preferring the laconic familiarity of Whitechapel to the exhausting ceremoniousness of Good Manners, reckoning “Epsom chaff” and Billingsgate dialogue the height of wit, and practical jokes the soul of humour—banishing, in a word, all self-control and restraint and all that distinguishes the man from the beast.

## CHAPTER XXI

### PROFESSIONALISM

JUST as jackals hunt in companies and—by a tacit understanding, however quarrelsome among themselves—invariably combine against their foreign foes or common prey, so too the numerous professions in England—partly through the newly-imported fashion of trans-Atlantic Trusts which is spreading through the country with that imitation which is said to be sincerest flattery, and partly through the growing mania for association in all things, coupled with the weakness of the Law—band themselves together for the maintenance of their charges and exactions at the highest possible level as well as for mutual protection, if indeed any is required where the Law itself is summoned in defence of its own iniquities.

Since the days when first machinery—well nigh a hundred years ago—fixed the capitalist on the shoulders of the working-man to whom he has proved a veritable Old Man of the Sea, the tendency has been for men with money and brains to unite for greater efficiency of self-defence, in order to secure the utmost immunity from the Law, and the more to tighten their power upon the victims against whom they propose to operate.

Most of us well remember the flourish of trumpets with which the early co-operative associations were preceded. A new era of human felicity was to dawn upon Great Britain. The consumer would be placed in more direct communication with the producer, a strict cash system would take the place of long credit and high prices, the “middleman grievance” would be reduced in number and virulence, to the benefit of both parties, and an inestimable boon would be conferred upon the country at large! It is strange that this system should not have been adopted on an enlarged scale before the last quarter of the nineteenth century, seeing that a hundred years before the effect of machinery was distinctly perceived in practically disestablishing the home factory, home industries, the small loom, and the small workman, who henceforth was handed over,

body and soul, to the tender mercies of the mill-owner with capital. The effect of the former revolution was almost precisely similar to the latter.

The Civil Service, Army and Navy, and other Associations at first tempted the public, by the brilliant prospects held forth to them, not only to abandon satisfactory tradesmen in their favour, but actually to pay them a handsome subscription into the bargain. It is needless to say that the retailers with small capital who were affected by the withdrawal of custom so induced, either passed into the Bankruptcy Court, or if provided with sufficient capital started on their own account, enforcing the cash system where possible and adopting strictly co-operative prices.

It must, however, be admitted that one benefit arose through this departure. The public, too long accustomed to the patience and resignation of British tradesmen, which in turn reacted disastrously on trade as well as on their own economic position, became accustomed to the novel notion of paying cash on delivery.

Now, if there is one more glaring defect than another in the English character, it is the touching, if stupid, fidelity to any institution to which they have grown accustomed, and which has been commended to them with sufficient persistency by the Press. Slow to move, when once they have placed their affections and belief in any movement or person or thing—no matter what change may take place or however circumstances may alter, they remain faithful to the object of their affection.

Naturally, the Press was largely bribed to support these vast undertakings. The foolish British investor jumped eagerly at the bait, all forgetful of the well-known axiom, which cannot be too often repeated, that where there is any conformity or conspiracy on a large scale for any vast undertaking in which many Englishmen are concerned—whatever be the professions of philanthropy or public utility which are advanced in its support—the only safe rule for the public is to look closely to their pockets.

When the Pneumatic Bread Company started on its adventurous and successful career the papers were filled with "puffs" announcing the usual cant about filling a "well-known want" and supplying the comforts of the rich as well as the modest

requirements of the city clerk and the dinnerless shop-girl, at a hitherto unprecedented price—even the most cynical and suspicious customers were lured by their promises until they discovered that these pseudophilanthropic co-operative companies, instead of lowering their prices in conformity with their vast profits—following in the well-known footsteps of all other similar British institutions from a bun shop to a monster hotel—proceeded little by little to cut down the quality of their goods to a minimum, and hand over their enormous profits to a body of shareholders, instead of to the consuming public for whose interests at the outset they professed so much solicitude. Whatever philanthropy is ever displayed in the formation, conduct, and working of these companies has certainly found its way into the coffers of greedy shareholders, who, with a truly British conviction that charity begins at home, have speculated in “public charities” of this kind, with the only appreciable result of enriching themselves and of plunging the smaller retailers into bankruptcy and penury.

Just as Machinery, Trusts, and Combinations of all kinds, and, above all, anonymous Corporations, are able by their concentration and large command of capital to secure practical omnipotence before the Law, while wholly exempt from any compunction or personal feeling for their victims by reason of the impersonal nature of their undertaking, large Stores and Co-operative Societies not only deceive the customer into accepting inferior goods and paying higher for them by the glamour of their wealth and supposed integrity, but are even apt to captivate the confidence and lull the suspicions of their own clients and subscribers to an almost incredible extent.

In another direction the want of discernment and bovine stupidity of John Bull in following a beaten path, is never more strikingly displayed than in connection with what he loves to call “old-established firms.”

Just as lying Peerages and Directories are paid to invent the genealogies of mushroom dukes and the sham “aristocracy” with which the land abounds—so the Press has only to wave its magic wand over the last new hotel, the last fashionable restaurant, and even the latest gold mine, for silly folks to rush after it helter-skelter, and unlike our neighbours over the

Channel, instead of thrusting it aside after a few years' trial as a thing out-of-date or "démodé"—let but its character once stand high, with Royalty and the magnates of the land for its patrons, it will most surely go on like "Charley's Aunt," "still running," while there is a man, woman or child in the kingdom left to taste its sweetness.

Those great singers and popular English favourites in their day, Mario and Grisi, sang many years before my time. Nevertheless, in my boyhood Mario was still singing at the age of sixty to sixty-five upon the English stage, drawing the largest audiences, and, in common with Mr. Sims Reeves in the concert hall, enjoying the highest popularity—though their voices had long since departed, and a mere ghost of ancient recollections repaid the public for their touching fidelity and devotion.

Similarly, the caterers and purveyors of our public amusements, taking advantage of this well-known British characteristic, delight in "fooling the Briton to the top of his bent." The moment an hotel acquires notoriety, and by laborious exertions at the start a certain popularity is attained, the *modus operandi* is then, if an hotel, to turn off the French cook and put in his place the housemaid or charwoman, then the paint and decoration goes to rack and ruin, the whole management is abandoned, and it sinks rapidly into the condition of the true-British sample, which may briefly be described as a bloated or enlarged pothouse; and yet the public, not because they specially enjoy the fare provided, for they are generally no judges whatever of what is good and what is not, but simply because it has once had a great reputation, will knowingly suffer its managers to take the fullest advantage of their weakness by cutting down their expenses one-half and over-charging as much or more than ever. We see such as these everywhere monopolising the custom of the rich.

Your newest hotel, your up-to-date magazine, newspaper, club, or theatre, after a reckless course of advertisement, electrifies its delighted patrons for the first six months or so with the profusion of its comforts and the perfection of its every detail. Once firmly seated, however, upon the broad and hospitable back of John Bull—hey presto! the scene changes, the edict goes forth for strict economy at every point; the ornamentals are discharged, the luxurious accessories stopped, and the managers proceed to

indemnify themselves for their early expenditure upon the public, by stinting it for ever after to their own signal pecuniary profit, without the smallest risk of discovery or public resentment, at the hands of their stupid or long-suffering patrons.

When once a name for anything is made in England fortune comes to stay. The same guns that the fashionable New Bond Street gunmakers charge £160 a pair for, are actually made and can be bought elsewhere at from £60 to £70. Furthermore—the very guns which they sell to their deluded customers are brought up in the rough from the Birmingham makers, and after being engraved and touched up by the Bond Street workmen, and inscribed with the magic Bond Street name, the fortunate possessor or purchaser of that name is allowed by a confiding public to pocket from 50 to 100 guineas upon the transaction for no better reason than that the British Public has been accustomed to associate the said name with good guns in the past, although in nine cases out of ten the possessor of that name no longer lives, or, if he does, has probably retired long ago or started as a country gentleman on his own account; nor at any time, in any strict or proper sense, could he ever be called a gunmaker at all!

In my younger days I well remember that it was firmly believed that only one tailor, one hosier, one bootmaker, a very few gunmakers and saddlers, and undoubtedly one, and one only billiard-table maker, existed in the British Empire. Trading upon this undoubted British failing, the temporary possessors of these magic names follow each other with bewildering succession, because a tradesman's name, once firmly established, is practically an undying corporation, which passes on through any number of hands or is possibly turned into a joint stock company—since the main purpose of defrauding the public under false pretences is equally well served, whether the name of the real owner is Brown, or Jones, or Robinson. Moreover, the price paid for these magic names is so exorbitant that were these Bond Street worthies by accident to speak the truth when asked the reason for the enormous prices they charge above their Birmingham rivals, they would explain that they were compelled to charge double the price of their neighbours for the simple reason that the premium which they paid for their goodwill—that is, for the

right to deceive the public by trading under a false name—requires them to apportion their loss over the guns or billiard-tables which they sell.

But the chief triumph of the bloated companies, associations, or societies for mutual protection, is the skill with which they induce their unhappy clients by ingenious collusive action to pay prices that are altogether out of proportion to the work done, by the simple process of inventing an enormously high tariff or scale of charges. Then when any dispute arises, their collective or corporate interest with the Press and the Law is such that not only the suitor who endeavours to escape their exactions has no chance with either judge or jury, but if there seems the slightest probability from the grossness of the wrong inflicted that a suitor may obtain a remedy in the Courts of Justice, their influence is sufficient to checkmate him, by procuring the matter to be tried before a referee, who is invariably guided by the skilled evidence (as it is facetiously called) of those who belong to, or are strictly affiliated with, the very corporation against which the complaint is brought. In short, the machinery of corporations or societies, like those of lawyers, barristers, doctors, dentists, architects, surveyors, engineers, parsons, bankers, and railway companies, either by their solidarity or collective influence in the Press and thereby over judges, juries and referees, acquire such overwhelming power that no private individual who is not a member of similar trades, or castes, has any chance of fair play when brought into collision with them. Finally, though their scale of charges has no higher sanction than a careful computation of the highest fees that they are likely to extort from their victims, qualified to a very slight extent by the laws of demand and supply which they are practically by their close affiliation in a position to defy—for some hidden reason which is difficult to determine, but is probably a compound of stupidity and awe—through the undoubted authority they exercise over the minds of the great majority of Englishmen, reacting upon judges and juries by means of their Press supporters—they manage to maintain an exorbitant level beyond all reason or relation to external facts and prices, which, by long immunity, obtains even in Courts of Justice a sanction amounting to prescription. For such is the uncritical character of the



average Briton, his overweening respect for all trades and professions, and his extreme aversion to be the first to assert an opinion or to originate an idea, that in the same manner as he raises the prices of hotels all through the Continent by his unwillingness—which he shares in common with the Americans—to dispute a bill or expose extortion, so in matters of Law he has a marked dislike to be the first to “bell the cat,” with the result that there is scarcely any limit to corporate exactions and professional fees but what their prudence and sagacity dictate.

To take one instance among many, most Englishmen who have had experience of foreign doctors will admit that for care, method, knowledge, dieting, and up-to-date information, combined with reasonable charges, they offer a favorable contrast to their pampered cotemporaries in these islands. Personally, if I had a sick wife or child I would prefer in the light of my own experience to entrust them to a country doctor in France or Germany than the first physicians in Great Britain. Of course I am fully aware that my fellow-countrymen—with that touching simplicity which they display alone in matters presented to them by a lying and interested Press—are continually assured in articles, probably written by or for English doctors in foreign countries, that the English constitution cannot be adequately treated by foreign physicians, differing as it does in important particulars, etc., with the result that fourth-class English doctors abroad of no ability or experience and less instruction pocket uncounted guineas wherever Englishmen do mostly congregate, by the side of far more cultivated, able, and attentive native doctors, who charge scarcely more shillings than the Englishmen pounds. Nevertheless, I cannot admit that such fantastic views of the insular constitution has any real foundation; nor do I imagine that any well-educated Englishman, who has any acquaintance with the admirable system of instruction imparted in the leading medical universities abroad, can have the slightest hesitation in admitting that they are fully equal if not superior to our own. Yet, with the exception of a few notable quacks, who, understanding the British character and having fathomed the heights and depths of his stupidity in such matters, manage actually to draw an enormous British practice even in the remotest towns of the Continent by the simple expedient of

charging from ten to twenty times more than the leading Continental professors, the charges usually made by foreign professors are greatly below those of our own country. Nor can the more moderate charges of doctors and lawyers on the Continent be explained by their greater numbers per head of population, or the higher prices of medicine, or the greater cost of living in this country. It therefore follows as an undeniable fact that when one obtains far more care, attention, dieting, and systematic skill than at home, combined with an application of the very latest discoveries for five shillings, or less, per visit, instead of a guinea—such a phenomenon cannot be explained except in the light of the considerations which I have endeavoured above to set forth.

The crowning iniquity, however, of the British system of licensed professional roguery seems to lie in the system of rating according to the fortune of, or, as a test of the former, the house occupied by, the patient. Nothing is more consonant with reason and common sense than that a service should be paid for according to its subjective value, that is, according to the intelligence, art, and skill deployed in the services rendered. By what process of reasoning this monstrous excuse for plunder is devised, beyond that of offering a pretext for overcharging those whom they believe to be unwilling to resist them, is a problem which I must, in despair, abandon to my readers, or to "professional" ingenuity.

When staying at Florence twenty years ago, being then in the hands of an English doctor, and not having in those days yet freed myself from the carefully disseminated British prejudices against foreign medical skill, the jolly Irish doctor who attended me and whose chief occupation seemed to consist in walking about the town from one hotel to another, smoking a strong cigar and scraping acquaintance with all and sundry, came in one day rubbing his hands with unconcealed delight, telling me he had met with a singular stroke of luck such as had not happened to him for years. "Why," said he, "what do you think! The Marchioness of B. . ., who was staying at the hotel just opposite, having taken a slight chill in the train, inquired for an English doctor, and as I always go round and tip the head-waiters to resort to me in such cases, she sent for me." Naturally

I rejoined, "I hope nothing serious." "Oh! nothing at all," says he. "Only a cold in the head—she is going on to Rome to-morrow." "Well," said I, "I see no great cause for rejoicing as she will not be much use to you in that case." "Oh, won't she!" said he, "I have written her up a prescription, and I shall charge her fifty guineas"!! I sincerely hope he did not get it.

One hears much cant about the deplorable state of the law in Sicily and Corsica, but from what I have known and the personal experiences I have undergone, I deliberately declare that the risks of a traveller who carelessly ventures into the wilds of New Bond Street and Harley Street far greater than any he may incur in those much maligned islands of the Mediterranean.

With regard to dentists, here is another touching instance of Britannic simplicity and the wiles of advertisers. Though it is true that one or more of the most important inventions connected with the purely mechanical art of dentistry have come to us from across the Atlantic, there is no more unfounded notion and more wholly baseless supposition than that American dentists at the present hour have any superiority over those of other lands. But, as I have before endeavoured to explain, the art of wholesale advertisement and Press-combination, which has originated in the fertile brain of the Yankee and is only slowly making its way in this country from the gradual Americanisation of our institutions, gained for the Yankee dentist such a long start over English or foreign in the Press of the world that, just as a lie once spread by the wings of the Press is traditionally supposed to endure for ever, the average Englishman will continue to believe that there is no dentist in the world to be compared with the American, until the crack of doom.

It is perfectly true that large schools of dentistry have been formed with State assistance in nearly every town in America, for whether it be from drinking ice-cold water alternating with hot-gulps of tea, or the abuse of hot cakes and molasses or some other reason, there can be no doubt that dyspepsia has marked them for its own, with the result that dentists abound in every town and village, and a cheap and efficient course of dentistry

being within the reach of every dull boy who seems fit for nothing else, the unfortunately wide diffusion of the fable relating to the superiority of American dentistry over Continental, procures a handsome living, out of all proportion to the value of their services, for an ever-increasing mob of youths highly endowed with American assurance, some slight mechanical skill and a total absence of education, too often drawn from the dregs of society.

It is, however, among the simple and unsuspecting populace of Central and Southern America that the Yankee "drummer" and travelling dentist finds the finest scope for his varied rogueries. As they generally hunt in couples and play into each other's hands by quartering the ground on the search for easy victims, and are perfectly versed, however uneducated, in all the ways of self-advertisement and cajolery, they are usually by the adroit use of a seat at the table of the best hotel and a twenty dollar suit of "Store clothes" enabled to pass among foreigners as gentlemen of a sort, and easily win the hospitality of the unsuspecting natives. The usual method is to worm themselves into the confidence and, if possible, the society of their victim's family under the pretext of professional assistance, stoutly refusing to name their fee in advance when requested, preferring to reserve a surprise for their patients after their services have been rendered in the shape of an enormous bill from ten to twenty-fold beyond what their work is worth, relying on the delicacy or indifference of their clients for satisfying their outrageous extortions.

I knew a rogue of that description at Santiago, who by considerable expenditure of whisky "sours" and brandy "cocktails" at the principal hotel, where he resided, combined with an exceedingly loud suit of clothes and the manners and language of the familiar Yankee "drummer," contrived to gain a certain consideration from the hospitable Chilians, who considered him in the light of a very distinguished if eccentric member of society. He had two systems which could have only occurred to the lowest and veriest blackguard (unless, indeed, it forms part, as I have been assured, of the stock-in-trade of the average American dentist) which was in the first place to create cavities in the teeth of his patients by the sharp stroke of a case-

hardened steel instrument, which subsequently afforded him an occasion to make a "stopping" and could thus procure him abundant business until discovery; the second was a system of blackmail by which, after he had acquired a considerable number of patients among the Santiago ladies by discovering imaginary "cavities" in surprising abundance owing to the aforesaid methods, he would threaten to show the diagrams of the teeth so operated on (of which he kept a book specially printed for the purpose) to their male or other acquaintances unless his nefarious charges and various impostures were acceded to. Luckily a boasting confession to the above effect in the bar of the hotel, however well received by his Yankee boon-companions who regarded his tricks as "real cute," made it advisable for him to quit the scene of his triumphs in a somewhat hasty and undignified manner.

In these Southern countries, and above all in the land of his birth, the Yankee dentist, or doctor either for the matter of that, would find little support in a Court of Law for his exorbitant charges and pretensions. In England, however, the case is totally different; for, as we have remarked above, judges and juries in all matters relating to professional extortion invariably refer the matter to the extortioners themselves, with the result that the complainant against doctors' or dentists' charges, or indeed those of any professional rogue whatever, is practically without remedy, unless he can show by incontestable evidence that he has bargained in advance for the work to be done at a particular price, and, what is more, is prepared to prove the same in a Court of Law.

Well do I remember how, permeated from my earliest recollections with a touching belief in the superiority of the Yankee dentist, I imprudently committed myself to the hands of one of the craft who possessed a high reputation in the fashionable district of Park Lane, and who, on examining my teeth and declaring there was nothing the matter with them, proceeded, however, to perform an operation which he said would improve their appearance by scraping them on three successive days, charging me six guineas for the three half hours he had so employed, that is, at the rate of four guineas an hour! I have also a distinct recollection, when I had stoutly refused to do so,

that my solicitor recommended me to pay the same, explaining that, unless a previous contract for price had been made, there was no chance of checking or limiting the demands of professional men, since the verdict of the judge or jury was invariably determined by professional or expert evidence. In other words, the American dentist in question would certainly obtain whatsoever fees he claimed unless I brought other American dentists to prove that the charge was exorbitant—which it was needless to say would be an utterly hopeless task.

It will be remembered that ten years ago two or three daring barbers of German extraction were brought up at the Police Courts for this novel method of extorting money (evidently patterned upon the American dentist) and for which they suffered a considerable term of imprisonment, they having performed precisely the same feat as my friend of Park Street at a much lower rate, because the Police Magistrate was satisfied on the evidence of the complainants that the barbers in question, having shaved their customers, offered to scale their teeth as well, and, having done so, made the extravagant charge of ten shillings and refused to allow their customers to depart until the money had been paid.

The difference, therefore, in the view taken by the law upon these separate cases consists not in the remuneration extorted but in the summary means taken to enforce the payment, which is surely most interesting, as a sample of the ways and means of British Law.

For in this country the man who steals a penny bun or the child who puts his hand in a bag of raisins or plums outside a grocer's shop is far more severely punished than the trusted agent or cashier who takes advantage of the complete confidence which is reposed in him to falsify his accounts and withdraw large sums from his till. In the first place, imprisonment is the reward; and in the last, the convictions are so few and far between as scarcely ever to be brought before the magistrate—the theory of the law apparently being that if an Englishman is such a fool as to trust another Englishman, he deserves anything he may get!

To return to our dentists—it is surely unnecessary to remind intelligent English men and women that, while it is natural and fitting that the reward of Science should bear a due proportion

to the time and intellect spent in its acquisition, it is utterly monstrous to expect that purely mechanical labour like teeth-stopping, to say nothing of teeth polishing, should be rewarded on anything like the same scale as surgery, although the dentists cunningly apply the term "operation" to each alike, and besides have the intolerable impudence to assume the title of surgeon dentists.

Here again we are met by the illimitable collective stupidity of the public which allows itself to be gulled by the ludicrous and transparent fraud of an usurped title; for presumably it is by nothing so much as the impressive variety of their imposture (as seen in such titles as "pharmaceutical chemist" "surgeon-dentist," "scientific artists in dentistry," etc., etc.), which induces Britons to submit to the frauds to which they are daily subject at the hands of these individuals.

Excessive competition in these later days, and possibly a slight awakening to their monstrous pretensions, has lowered the public appreciation of the mysterious powers and capacities of our "Pharmaceutical-chemists"—which, by the way, is itself utter nonsense, and corresponds to a Butchering-Slaughterer or a Sheep-killing Butcher—who, though they pay less for drugs than any drug-makers or drug-mixers in Europe, are apparently entitled to charge from four to six times as much as they do on the Continent by virtue of the awe which their magnificent title inspires in an unreasoning public.

In more favoured lands, when individual chemists, either from their rarity or greater impudence, charge abnormal prices for drugs of the highest value to the inhabitants, such as quinine, mercury, etc., practically cornering them and depriving the poor of their use, the Governments of such nations—as, for example, Peru, Chili, Italy and Spain, and other non-commercial countries upon whom Englishmen are never tired of venting their contempt and disesteem—consider it their duty to place such drugs within the reach of the public at cost price, besides providing public dispensaries where the highest medical assistance can be gratuitously obtained.

As to tooth-drawing, it is needless to remark that here we have an art which may be placed on the same level with that of basket-making or chair-bottoming, consisting as it does

in the exercise of the barest mechanical skill combined with moderate experience; yet, while tooth-drawers abound in England, and indeed there is not a village, however small, where the local blacksmith or carpenter is not ready to perform in this direction to any extent desired—instead of a franc or a shilling, which is the usual charge on the Continent, five shillings is often charged by the smallest local practitioners, and, judging by my own experience, no man who goes to a dentist in a frock coat and a silk hat will be charged less than a guinea in our modern Babylon of roguery and imposture.

Nor is this all. With an ingenuity and a cunning worthy of a better cause, there is scarcely a dentist in London who has not some poor relation, brother, or cousin, in his den along with him for the express purpose of extorting another guinea under the pretence of being specially gifted and qualified to administer anæsthetics. Now as this person is generally a mere hack, and undoubtedly would not waste his time in such trifles had he the talents for anything better—and seeing, moreover, that when a person so treated dies under it from careless handling or inferior gas no notice whatever is taken (as I know, from two instances of undoubted authenticity), and furthermore, that the time occupied in application and materials used is scarcely worth a shilling—to charge two guineas for taking a tooth out with gas is nothing but an ingenious combination of roguery and impudence. Nor do their iniquities end here; for, as is well known to the profession, the dangers of anæsthetics and their irregular action, combined with their uncertain and ever-varying effects upon different individuals, with the chance of at least a death in every three or four thousand operated upon, have discredited their use for trifling operations, the local injection of cocaine being far safer, painless, and absolutely efficient in destroying every sensation in tooth-drawing, or any similar local operation upon a limited area. The English and American West-end dentists, however, having the entire Press and their own powerful organization behind them, utterly defying public opinion and private pressure alike, continue to charge two guineas for the painless extraction of a tooth, hunting in couples as aforesaid, being well aware that if they adopted the safer and simpler Continental method of local application of cocaine they would



have no excuse for extorting any more than the few shillings charged by their Continental rivals.

It would be beyond the limits of these remarks to successfully expose the varying, if closely related, tricks of various trades and professions in order to delude the British customer (most patient of mortals) into paying exorbitant fees without the slightest guarantee for success or fulfilment in return. Though usually inferior to their Continental rivals in accuracy, design, finish, or assiduity, the fees of all artistic professions and their scale of work is, as a rule, from a third to one-half higher than abroad, and the sub-division of work, which I have not unfairly illustrated in the case of the dentist, is carried to an extent in England which is quite unknown upon the Continent. For while in England an architect is not only paid a high proportion of the total cost of a building for the estimate of that cost (which, by the way, he is never legally bound by, and scarcely ever kept to), and, secondly, exacts another large slice for his computation of materials, which is usually incorrect and can scarcely ever be relied upon—he invariably makes a point of astonishing his employer by another wholly unexpected charge for supervising the work, which, having once undertaken, he seldom personally condescends to re-visit or inspect; while the foreign architect, charging far lower prices, not only computes with greater accuracy, but is always willing to undertake that his building should not exceed a certain sum, and, what is more, overlooks, inspects, and directs the entire work personally without further charge.

I have already, under the heading of Law, described how ingeniously the British solicitor contrives by division of labour, like the dentist and his confederate, to double expenses and halve his responsibilities with the barrister; while the foreign notary manages the whole business from beginning to end for about half the money with far more successful results, being, as he is, the sole depository of the complainant's tale, and consequently more likely to present a suitor's case accurately than when it passes at second-hand.

The surveyor and engineer (who if he were to call himself an "Archimedean-geometrical-surveyor," after the manner of the chemists, might extort even higher fees) is a vague and mysterious being of uncertain import and ambiguous learning

to which John Bull attributes an almost sacred worship and reverence, presumably on the principle of "Omne ignotum pro magnifico." His scale of fees, which, as (is usual) is prepared by the Surveyors' Society without any kind of legal sanction, but which in practice is more binding on the public than the laws of the Medes and Persians, is not to be regarded as an unvarying scale of fees, or, indeed, to be binding on any of their members in any way, except that when an unfortunate employer finds one of these august beings to be totally devoid of skill, knowledge, or competence, and sustains severe damage thereby, he may rest assured that whatever damage he (the employer) may have sustained, the fullest scale charges of his Company or Society will undoubtedly be awarded to the delinquent by a subservient jury. As for the higher members of the profession, they soar to such a stupendous height in the arts of imposture and extortion, and thrive so magnificently, not so much by reason of their talents in their own line of business as by successfully advertising the same and keeping themselves before the public by Press notices and numberless collateral artifices among which not the least lucrative are Arbitrations and Special-witness-ships, that their charges advance by leaps and bounds to such a point as only those can believe or realise who have had occasion to call in their services or witness the illimitable faith that Englishmen place in leading members of the various professions. Nor are their professional fees the principal source of their income. When their reputation is once sufficiently advertised, few harvests are more lucrative to the leading professional than those arbitrations and expert-witness-appearances in court, which, as I have before mentioned, constitute such a remarkable feature of our Law; for since the uncertainty of Law is so great and so universally recognised, when important matters involving thousands of pounds are at stake, turning as they generally do upon technical matters in connection with contracts, public works, etc.—the parties concerned, nay, the judges themselves by tacit inter-professional collusion, remove the cases from the Courts of Law to public arbitration. These arbitrations are nothing but grotesque caricatures carried on for the behoof of the lawyers and expert witnesses. Enormous fees are paid, when the case pending is of the highest importance to all, the most noted or

best advertised professionals connected with the matter in hand (as a rule the more witnesses the greater the money involved), and barristers at hundreds of guineas apiece are flung in by the dozen without rhyme or reason to aggravate the confusion and increase the expenses, for no better reason than the well-known oft-repeated one, that "*there's any amount of money on both sides.*"

It is also in England thoroughly understood that the expert gives his evidence according as he is paid, without any regard for truth or any attempt to justify the same except in so far as his wit will serve him as a defence under cross-examination, when his professed opinions, adopted for the occasion only, are frequently altogether too grotesque for belief. Naturally the other side has to spend an equal sum of money for experts who will swear to the opposite view, all of which causes greater protraction of the trial, more expenses, and, therefore, brings in more grist to the legal and professional mill, the whole being a gigantic fraud provided for the mutual benefit of the interested professions, no real attempt of any kind being made to attain the truth or any tangible result—except great profits to the lawyers and special witnesses, a scandalous waste of money by the suitors concerned, and a striking display of judicial impotence and inefficiency.

Can anything be more appalling than the revelations which were recently made of the universal commercial roguery in high places in the United States, when millions were openly stolen from the profits of the great Insurance Companies by the wealthy capitalists to whose care their funds had been entrusted? Still more deplorable it is to hear that the general belief still exists there that whatever the State may do—to multiply checks and safeguards—such is the wide dearth of honesty in that country, and such the sordid rapacity of their highest public officials, that do what they may to protect the public, the "magnates of finance" and "commerce" will show themselves equal and ready to pursue their nefarious system of organised robbery, and to set all laws at defiance.

## CHAPTER XXII

### VULCAN OR CHRIST?

It is not enough that we independent Britons, who "Never, never, will be slaves," allow ourselves to be trampled on by the Press, the lawyers, and the parsons, all of whom not only delight to dance upon our prostrate bodies, while, stranger still, we deem ourselves highly flattered in being so used; we must also set up another idol before which to bow down, whom I will call Vulcan, as the appropriate patron saint of engineers and surveyors.

Looking back over the history of the last one hundred and fifty years, I can see no greater public misfortune, and none that has so deeply affected the general weal as—Machinery. I am aware that nothing is more difficult than to roll back the tide of opinion, even if current opinion is obviously false, and its reverse as plain a fact as the sun at mid-day. It must be admitted, however, that this particular opinion in favour of the blessings of machinery (though it rages through the country like a roaring lion, pelting us on every platform and re-echoed in every newspaper), undoubtedly takes its origin, not in those affected, not in the millions, but in the ruling, and, above all, the commercial and capitalist classes.

There is probably nothing more difficult than to divest oneself of the opinions of one's youth, more especially when they are dinned into you in novel, speech and Press, "with most damnable iteration." Indeed, they become a second religion to most of us, and are as ineradicable as the first lessons learnt at a mother's knee.

I am strongly reminded here of the Greek fable of the lion who, as was not uncommon in those privileged days of old, walking through a picture gallery, was surprised to see a picture of Hercules strangling the Nemæan lion. "What is that?" says the lion. "Surely, methinks, a little overdone! But to be sure it is a man who is the painter," added he on further reflection. "If we lions were painters it would have been just the opposite." Has it never occurred to any of you, my gentle readers, that while in the first place there is nothing that is specially lofty

or soul-inspiring about this boasted age of iron, which our orators, writers, and politicians delight in glorifying, in the second place the praise seems invariably to come from the top and never from the bottom of society? from the wage-payers in short and not the wage-earners? Who ever heard a working man getting on a hustings in these days of labour orators and Socialism, to tell us that machinery and coal, steam and iron, have been the salvation of the working men, and since their advent everything has been for the best "in this best of all possible worlds"! Finally, let me entreat of you to remember a fact which we all find so difficult to keep steadily before us; namely, when we speak of our nation, our people, our land, that "the people" does not mean Society primarily, or even secondarily, nor the clubs, nor the scribbling clan, nor the lawyers, nor even the Army and Navy, nor the Court, as historians would fain persuade us. Let us keep steadily before us, first, that the workers of the land form the overwhelming majority, and, secondly, that they have a prepotent right to be considered first of all, because the minority above-mentioned are in a far higher degree qualified to meet and endure national misfortune than their less favoured fellow-countrymen.

Alas! how far have we travelled since Englishmen were the envy of the Continent, the cynosure of nations, the spoilt children of the earth? It is scarce five centuries ago since Sir John Fortescue, Lord Chief Justice of England, wrote his celebrated work, "De Laudibus Angliæ," in praise of Merry England and her happy people, whose liberties, customs, dress, lodging, food, and wages, were all quoted triumphantly in proof of his assertions. True it is that the rich are far richer than they were then, but what of that, if the poor are far poorer, which is surely as certain as any fact in this sublunary world can be, and above all, far less merry. For, indeed, they have little enough to be merry for now. The Sunday they have still! but how much longer will that be left to them as times are going?

Before the Reformation we are told that such was the degradation of the people, such was their inconceivable darkness and blindness to the obvious whole duty of man—which consists in enabling the rich man to grow richer by the sweat of the workman's brow, in order that the *Daily Mail* may tell us how Joseph

Chamberlain, wholesale screwmaker, of Birmingham, died worth a million, or J—e C——gs is making twenty-thousand a year out of Belgian locomotive building, or that a Chancellor of the Exchequer exults that he has been able to raise his annual budget by ten millions by merely adding sixpence to the Income-tax—that Englishmen actually abstained from work and enjoyed themselves as they pleased upon no less than forty feast days in the year. Think of that instead of your poor four Bank Holidays of these latter days ! Why, they might as well have been Spaniards, or Portuguese, or Corsicans, or South Americans ! For are we not told that the downfall of Spain—who once reared herself above the nations “like a Colossus between whose legs we little ones used to creep in and out”—is mainly owing to her numberless Saints’ days, which leave her so little time for honest labour that millionaires in that woe-begone land are scarcer than the black swans of antiquity ?

I know full well that at this late hour of the day it is sheer midsummer madness to say that toil is made for man and not man for toil, that to forge iron and steel, delve coal, and fatten manufacturers, is *not* the highest ideal to which man should attain, and that the happiness of the greater number and the contentment of the entire nation is and should be the objects of our hopes and desires. Nevertheless, having lived many years among many people who hold these opinions, and being ever-increasingly struck with the absence of general happiness in the land of my birth, I hold these opinions myself very strongly, and, what is more, so far from being ashamed of them, I glory in them.

Strangely enough, too, I know no people more deeply impressed than English men and women, whose fortune or health compels them to live abroad, with the universal contentment and vivacity of the simple peasants, workmen, and artisans of these despised countries ; nor can I believe that any one of these peasants, artisans, or workmen would willingly change their lot for that of our more highly-favoured countrymen. Speak to these degraded peasants, and you will find them as intelligent as any of your own acquaintance ! Doubtless they labour under the disadvantage of being neither under the guidance and authority of a parson or a squire, nor dependent upon the condescension of

Mrs. Parson, or the blankets and coals at Christmas of Mrs. Squire; for in all probability they have their humble little cot with their bit of vineyard or their hill-side pasture, their goats, or sheep, or pigs, where their ancestors have toiled and milked their herds and spun their simple clothing in much the same way for a thousand years. They care nothing for newspapers, and know little or nothing of the Japanese and Russian War, no *Daily Mail* soothes their idle hours, nor *Sunday News* to tell them of the Money Market, the last football match, or the latest odds on the Derby; yet, strange to say, their life is full of human interest and human sympathies, and though they know nothing of The Fashion and wear the clothes and simple finery that their parents wore in ages past, they make as brave a show at a village wedding or a church fair and enjoy themselves as keenly as the very best of us. But are we not constantly told, in fancied justification of the prevailing theory, that the natural results of these abundant holidays, these feasts, these Mayings, these village dances—which have passed away here with the Reformation, but which, alas! unhappily, still flourish in these benighted lands—are the causes of the “universal laziness” and “poverty,” which can be traced to it as truly and directly as the light to the sun? Hard as it is to dispel so oft-repeated an illusion—which I can only reconcile with the well-known truthfulness of my fellow-countrymen by the fact that they start with a foregone conclusion in their minds and record what they look for, or imagine what *must* be the case instead of *what they really see*—I doubt if more hard-working, industrious, and painstaking agriculturists, gardeners, cow-keepers, and cultivators generally can be found on the entire globe than the “lazy, lounging, mandoline-playing Italians,” the “Yodling Tyrolians,” and the “indolent, cigarette-smoking, café-haunting Spaniard and Portuguese” of English literary fame. Were I not intimately acquainted with the habits of my beloved countrymen and their intense desire to prove their own superiority over all other lands by searching out any weakness in their armour which can give colour to their own pet theories and support their favourite arguments, I should greatly incline to the opinion that, whatever their powers of description may be, sincerity and truth were not their leading characteristics. Possibly their ignorance of the early-rising habits of foreigners,

unknown to our own industrious populations, may account in a measure for one of their most constant mistakes. The Englishman who travels in his comfortable first-class carriage upon the Continent might, no doubt, if he were to raise his head from his snug cushions when he happens to travel at night, see the Italian peasant or the Swiss mountaineer working among his vines or tossing his hay between three and four o'clock in the morning of a summer's day; but as this is a matter of rare occurrence it is far more probable that his observations are confined to the comfortable landau in which he lolls back luxuriously as he surveys the busy streets or perambulates the country after an ample breakfast, about the hour when the tired toilers return to their family to enjoy their morning meal, after having worked from early dawn till the sun has risen high in the meridian. Nor do our critics generally find out that in these early-rising countries the summer work is done almost exclusively before the sun rises high, when, after a light breakfast, often taken outside their doors, the hours of the siesta are passed in light household work or sleeping under the roof-tree or shady vine bower, till the slanting rays send them again forth upon their evening errand of toil.

What is it that chiefly differentiates such countries from our own. I say unhesitatingly, Machinery! and I assert that what we are taught to call the blessings of Civilisation—steam, iron mechanical inventions, and electricity—tend from the very nature of things to break up all natural human ties with their endearing bonds, thus causing the grinding capitalist, who invests his money in this or that business, to regard his dependents as mere counters to whom he bears no other relations but those of master to servant, and whose spiritual and moral concerns have no more to do with him than those of the horses which he drives, or the dog which follows at his heels. Add to this, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the capitalist himself has nothing to do with the management of the firm or factory from which he derives his wealth, but merely nominates a manager to do his dirty work, and to drive and grind his teams of human implements in order to extract the highest possible work at the lowest possible wage. Now let us pause to think how things were in former days.

Throughout Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Lancashire, and York-



shire, or wherever light land and hilly downs favoured the growth of sheep, there the family of the shepherd would carry home their wool, to spin in the winter nights with the help of their women folk; or the big flock-master, selling to the small looms the produce of his sheep, provided work for small wool staplers who filled the ample villages, which still—though now empty and desolate—cover the hill-sides of the Southern counties. Machinery being then unknown, instead of sending up, as now, the wool in bales to the great centres where coal and iron abound and steam supersedes the use of human hands, the man who wove his woollen stuffs and cloths, lived where the wool was produced, in the sheep-growing lands, with his wife and family and perchance a few apprentices whom he fed and maintained in his own house and bred up with his own children. Thus there grew up the careful oversight and close relation between master and man that still binds in ties of affection and common sympathy the farmers and farm servants of our own more modern experience.

Two evils resulted from the change. When the population naturally followed their work, the towns and wolds of Lancashire and Yorkshire and nearly all the Southern counties, whose dwindling villages may be seen on every hand in every stage of ruin, became empty and deserted: while year by year their population moves away from the land into the crowded centres to the detriment of the health, comfort, and stamina of our people; and in the second place, instead of enjoying country air and the moderate hours and comparatively interesting work of the handloom, the weaving population of this country, through the help of Machinery, have been converted into mere human cogs or levers or parts of an engine which, however powerful for multiplying human effort, reduces man from a free agent to a mere mechanical instrument; while, by destroying home life, entire generations are weaned from domestic influences and condemned to the sterility of the barracks, the dreary tenement, or the comfortless bothy. Search Europe through, you will find the same sad story repeated, the more Machinery, the more Misery, Unthrift and Disruption of Home Life.

Nor is this the only evil that befalls the workers in mill or factory. I will not harrow my readers by recalling to their

minds the horrors that beset the early introduction of Machinery, which is fully detailed in the almost incredible reports procured for Parliament at the instance of the great Lord Shaftesbury. In these tear-stained pages are fully recorded the hideous tale of unfeeling greed of the earlier mill and mine owners—who ruthlessly herded men, women, and children into holes worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta—inducing savage and drunken parents to sell the services of their unhappy children to be harnessed by chains to trucks, and toil at trolley, wheel or shuttle from early dawn to dusk. Thank God that such things can no longer be! but that such things have been and are possible in our land, should at least make us more charitable and lenient in our views of the fancied misdeeds of other lands, and dispose us to display more modesty in the glorification of our own supposed superiority.

With all the advantages of close supervision by earnest male and female officials, few but those who are acquainted by actual experience have any idea how often even now the modest provisions of the Factories' Act, destined to protect them, are evaded, and how helpless girls and boys are handed over to ruthless taskmasters in factory, mill, and workshop, to grind out a monotonous life of toil in surroundings and under conditions to which the life of a slave negro (as I can assert from experience) is one of happiness and comparative ease. I have myself often seen herds of unkempt, unwashed girls—torn from their mothers at an early age, to satisfy, too often, the greed of a drunken and dissolute father, practically disabled for all domestic life, chained as it were to the loom, from early morn to dusk, too debased by the grinding monotony of their work to care for their appearance or fulfil the simplest personal requirements of cleanliness or neatness, except on a Sunday when the dark stuff dress and modest shawl which constitutes their sole weekday attire is exchanged for the gaudier hues which represent for them the nearest imitation of fashion—stream out of a shed where the thermometer is kept at little under boiling point and a steaming atmosphere scarcely allows them to see their next neighbour. Thus saturated with steam and heat, wet through with perspiration, they pass out of the gaslit sheds and furnace-like hovels in which they are condemned to work into

perchance a freezing temperature, which in spite of their precaution in wrapping their shawls tightly around their necks and heads, too often produce pulmonary complaints which carry them to an early grave. Others I have seen where loom and shuttle in a crowded area present a pandemonium of noise which defied the stoutest voice to penetrate. Here the unfortunate victims, who are often entered at an early age (now happily lengthened by the judicious exertions of the Education Board), sustain such injury to their immature systems that they are generally deaf before the age of five-and-twenty. Besides this, think for a moment of the sufferings of countless unfortunate children, of whom thousands are sacrificed annually in the making up of lucifer matches, paints, and other compounds, which inflict early troubles, Saint Vitus' Dance, and painful inflammations of the jaws and bones, in the service of the modern Baal, which we mis-call Civilisation. I will not dwell upon the miserable lives of thousands who toil day by day in the murky atmosphere of a Birmingham Grinding-shop, inhaling the fine particles of steel with which the air is filled, till they slowly sink towards an early grave between thirty and forty years of age, without hope of recovery. Nor need I harrow the reader's mind with the tales of early blindness induced by the saturation of the atmosphere in chemical works with acrid fumes which eat away the texture of the delicate membranes lining the eyes and nose and mouth, producing premature blindness, horrible disfigurement or grave injuries which lead to a variety of painful diseases ending in a painful and premature death. And all these horrors! to what end, except to stimulate excessive production, enrich manufacturers, and breed future misery, which, at the approach of bad prices, recoils upon the heads of its working producers!

In order, therefore, to thoroughly realise the full extent of these national evils which have beset us through our reckless worship of Vulcan in all its manifestations and developments, it will be perhaps well to begin by setting forth clearly the leading consequences which are directly traceable to this blind and unrestricted *Cultus*, which may be said to have fairly passed by frequent repetition from the axiomatic stage into the phase of Religious Acceptation.

Let us first consider the net result of Machinery upon the condition of the working classes, bearing well in mind that fully seven-eighths of our nation are born into the world without wealth or goods, without so much as a share of the land which they call their own, and, as a natural result, that they have only their arms and health and strength wherewith to gain their daily bread.

Modern Machinery multiplies from a hundred to a thousand-fold the work of human hands. Consequently it diminishes to that extent, or nearly, the value of human work, and raises thereby the machine or engine to the same extent above human efforts, placing thereby the capitalist who owns or can produce that machine, in a position to displace, or to do without, the work of as many men and women as would have been required formerly to produce the same amount of work.

Obviously, therefore, it follows from these premises that :

1. Machinery puts men out of work and diminishes the value of their labour.
2. Since every machine does the work of from one hundred to a thousand men, far less labour is required than before its invention in any given industry or art.
3. The effect of Machinery is that, being in itself, and above all to the workers, utterly uninteresting and exhausting through its unvarying regularity and monotony, it reacts upon the human mind, converting it into a mere semi-conscious piece of machinery, paralysing the exercise of nearly all the senses and all the higher attributes of the Intellect and Will.
4. With the exception of the engines requiring special skill, and which it must be noted enables a single individual to inspect and govern twenty or thirty in a single workshop, the remainder of those who "tend" or "feed" the machine—inasmuch as but little skill, intelligence, or anything more than subconscious or mechanical attention is required—command low wages, and thereby place labour in a great measure at the mercy of the capitalist, besides creating the "unemployed."
5. The total production of goods being increased by tens of thousands beyond what human labour could effect before the introduction of labour-saving machinery in Arts,

Industry, and Agriculture, not only thousands who would have otherwise found a market for their labour infallibly crowd into the towns in the vain hope of earning their bread—there to produce an ever-dwindling, starving population, deficient alike in size, stature and stamina, who are becoming rapidly unfit to supply the materials for adequate National defence or even to earn their own living—but we are compelled to embark upon a perilous competition with other nations to wrest from them by fraud or force the command of the world's markets and to grab all the lands of weaker peoples of the earth in order to oblige them to buy our superfluous goods to satisfy the ever-growing demands of taxation, and pay for the food which our own population at home is unable any longer to raise.

Of course I shall be met with the natural objection that in this respect we are in the same boat with a large part of Europe, with the essential difference that having got the start of the rest we are in a better industrial position and produce more per head of population than any other. But surely a moment's reflection will satisfy the most thoughtless, that while it is perfectly true that all the nations of Europe suffer in their degree from the universal worship of Vulcan, it is reserved for England alone to present to the world the peculiar conditions of dense population, exaggerated industrial production, shrinking and neglected agriculture, and restricted territory, which aggravate these evils to their highest conceivable point.

But these are not the only charges at the door of the Engineer since the advent of the New Iron Age.

#### PSEUDO-SANITATION.

If an intelligent Chinese were set himself to criticise us in the light of his own experience at home, one could easily imagine the incredulity mingled with stupor with which he would regard our so-called engineering feats in the direction of sanitation and agriculture by comparison with his own more favoured land. "Here is a people," he would exclaim, "who having a ridiculously small island to live upon, not only neglect their agriculture in order to convert themselves into a large

workshop to make goods which they cannot possibly use, trusting to the strength of their enormous navy to compel others to buy them in order to buy the bread which they cannot produce for themselves (just as they bombarded us at Canton thirty years ago because we would not allow them to sell us the opium without which they cannot meet their Indian bills), but with a still more fatal madness, instead of using the manurial values of their vast population, as we do, to extract from the ground by careful cultivation the utmost that their restricted territory can produce, they deliberately and carefully at enormous expense allow their engineers to use up nearly all the drinking water they possess in the country, in order to carry away that same invaluable element of life into the rivers and streams to the great expense and danger of their inhabitants and the almost total destruction of their oyster and fish supplies. Nor have they intelligence enough to make the most of the actual supplies afforded by Nature, for they allow their merchants to waste and destroy the fish supply of the ocean in order to keep up prices, to the great injury of the poor, while, with all their boasted knowledge, they have not even learnt the A.B.C. of fish-farming in their inland waters, where we are accustomed to raise fish crops that would enable them at the lowest cost to keep their entire pauper population !!!”

Probably, with that incredible blindness or partiality of vision which distinguishes the Briton, there is nothing he is more proud of than his universal “Sanitation,” as he calls it, his hot and cold water pipes, baths, sinks, water closets, etc. Yet think for a moment at what price this superiority has been obtained! One hundred years ago the advent of the Age of Iron and the triumphs of our inventive Engineers, coupled with the Cheap Production of iron and steel, had already placed us in the forefront of commercial nations, as we often proudly boast, though we should more truly say in the forefront of the worshippers and slaves of Vulcan. Still we should not forget that we were once the dirtiest people in Europe, and that every successive traveller visiting our shores testified to the absence of cleanliness, thrift, and domestic neatness which distinguished our homes. It seems, therefore, that this new-born national virtue of Cleanliness upon which we so greatly pride ourselves,

and which we invariably hurl in the teeth of our Continental friends, is not only of exceedingly late birth, but is probably nothing more than the direct result of the ingenuity of the engineer, surveyor, and architect, Vulcan's favoured Trinity, to force upon us their pipes here, and pipes there, and pipes everywhere, through that science misnamed Sanitation, which it is probably no exaggeration to say has claimed more victims—as it certainly has cost more national treasure—than all the wars of the Middle Ages. Nor have we even here touched the bottom of British stupidity and recklessness in national concerns of the deepest and most far-reaching importance. After having polluted all our rivers and spring-waters with poisonous mills and chemicals, instead of using their refuse and those of the population upon the land according to the clear suggestion of Nature and Science, we not only give full sway to the architect, the engineer, and the surveyor to exercise their fatal art in filling our houses, streets, and towns with myriads of miles of piping for the benefit of their own trade and that of their fellow-conspirators, but we have deliberately set ourselves to help in developing an universal system of Sanitary Water Carriage, as these gentry euphoniously term it; which in plain English means to carry away a valuable product of national importance, to where it will certainly do harm to our neighbours without doing good to any one, and at the same time using up for this same "water carriage" the springs, lakes, and reservoirs of pure water which Providence has expressly bestowed upon us as one of His most precious gifts, for the refreshment and delight of the community!

Another flagrant result of the advent of the Reign of Iron is the enormous increase of pauperism which, along with the rise of the middle classes to unexampled wealth and prosperity, signalized the opening of the last century. About the Battle of Waterloo, the strange contrast between our reckless expenditure upon the Napoleonic wars, which brought up the National Debt to nearly nine hundred millions, sterling, and the condition of the great bulk of the people—which was infinitely worse in point of ignorance, immorality, drunkenness, squalor, and wholesale misery than any other people in Europe—reached its highest point. This lamentable state of things, described by a foreign

observer as a land of "Millionaires and Misery," which, added to bread at a shilling a quartern loaf, absolutely debarred the poorer classes from tasting wheaten bread, and drove thousands to subsist upon the refuse of horse and pig troughs, and turnips or potatoes which they stole at night from the fields—produced the phenomenon of a growing population not far in number from the entire population of England in the glorious days of King Edward the Third—deprived of all means of sustenance—actually living, or rather starving, upon public bounty. Such in a word was the immediate results of the opening of that glorious Iron Age, which the Press, the Law, the Parliament, in short, all our Professors, Preachers and Teachers conspire to flash in our faces at every opportunity, with most "damnable iteration," as if to silence the still small voice of the national conscience that slowly but surely must rise reproachfully within us when we see the straits to which it has brought us.

All honour to the Liberal Party, who, shocked and touched by the condition of the nation, the heartless domination of the manufacturers and the despotic rule of the land-owning classes, strove desperately to redress the people's wrongs, and, as far as might be, to admit them to a fair share in the government of their country. The great Reform Act of '32 went far to remove the gross inequalities which had previously existed, by virtue of which the bulk of political power, through the means of the so-called corrupt boroughs, enabled the rich and unscrupulous to sway and control the destinies of the nation, while the great growing towns of the Midlands and the North of England, with their teeming millions and their divergent interests, increasing wealth and education, were deprived of all weight in the political balance. Another great measure by which the corn duties were removed in order to free the food of the poorer classes from taxation gave undoubted relief to the millions, while it still further embittered the Plutocracy, whose wings had already been severely scorched by the enactments of '32, and the extension of political power in the direction of the middle classes. Led, however, by that reckless and unscrupulous politician, Benjamin Disraeli, the infuriated Conservatives soon revenged themselves by the strange device of recovering the ground which they had lost in popular estimation and



regaining the power which they had so long enjoyed, by out-vying their Liberal opponents in the popular extension of the Franchise. The rock of Sisyphus, which, with an infatuation almost incredible in the light of after events they set rolling, soon recoiled upon their own heads. And here we are met with the amazing paradox (were it not once more repeated in our own days) that the man who taught his party to gain a temporary advantage over the Liberals, by selling their own privileges in order to obtain a brief period of power, and setting up the competition of popular rights to auction until every vestige of their ancient power and influence had been bartered away, still retains the highest place in the love and veneration of English Tories! Also, regardless of the fact that he was the author of their downfall and political annihilation, they see in him only the avenger of their wrongs and the champion of Protection, which along with their exclusive privileges had been swept away by the rising Liberal tide.

I will not here describe at full length the devious ways of folly (for which after all in the last resort the entire nation is answerable) by reason of which, through the insane jealousies and unpatriotic selfishness of both Parties in the State, the Conservatives outvied the Liberals in reckless haste to put up political power to auction under the guidance of Benjamin Disraeli. Suffice it to say, that the nation calmly endured the spectacle of the sacrifice of the commonwealth to the insane rivalry of political parties without any serious attempt to interfere or foresee the results, till she found herself, as she still finds herself, in a position of difficulty from which it is well nigh impossible to extricate her.

Let us consider for a moment, in the light of what we have laid down above, what her obvious needs and most pressing wants must necessarily be. In the first place she is an island, that is, circumscribed in territory without any power of enlarging her frontier. Secondly, she is not only densely populated, but has a rapidly increasing population. Thirdly, thanks to the reign of Vulcan, she is a nation of shopkeepers, and is taught that to be the workshop of the world and distribute her goods to the entire world is her hope, her refuge, and her glory. Fourthly, she has depressed agriculture in favour of factories until she is

unable to grow her own food supplies. She is the workshop of the nations, and her ships distribute over the ocean her goods to every land.

It follows from this that with a stupidity and imprudence which seems to justify the old Roman saying—

“ Quos deus vult perdere prius dementat ”\*

we are, deliberately and open-eyed, rushing to our doom. For while our only safety obviously lies in keeping up to the highest point the antique valour of our sons which, in the glorious reign of Edward the Third, enabled us to sally forth and meet the serried ranks of France and Spain our far more populous and powerful rivals, we now carefully avoid taking those steps which even our more favourably-situated Continental neighbours think advisable and necessary for their safety, by our fixed resolve not to train up our sons to defend us; and while dependent on foreign sources for our food supplies, reckon nothing that party strife has banned agriculture in favour of the shop and the factory. Nor do we take heed that our success in commerce stings the jealousies of the world to madness while we grow more defenceless every day and the war clouds gather about us, and the nations around howl for reprisals like wolf-hounds straining at the leash!

Are we showing any signs of amendment in this year of grace, 1906? Fresh awakened from our dream of perpetual peace and prosperity by the rude shock of the Boer War into which we had placidly drifted while the newspapers told us that all that was required was to send a large army of fifty or sixty thousand men which should so envelop and surround the foolish farmers who defied the might of Britain as to disarm them and prevent all resistance, we speedily found that our mercenary army, which we had always considered, if small and expensive, at least highly trained and invincible, proved totally inadequate for the stress put upon it. Had it not been for the old spirit lurking in our midst which sallied forth to the rescue from field, shop, forge, workshop and factory, and millions of money poured out like water upon the thirsty soil of Africa, causing England with all her wealth to reel under the shock, where would we be now?

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\* “ Whom the gods design to ruin, they first make mad.”

Within an ace of discomfiture, our military prestige all gone, beaten by a handful of sporting farmers without training or knowledge of war, all the nations of the earth almost to a man against us espousing vigorously the cause of the weak prey in the jaws of the angry mastiff, just as we ourselves had done a thousand times before, and would have done again had our cases been reversed!—where are we now? We all know that John Bull can only get one thing into his head at a time, and not always that either. He has been severely hit in the breeches pocket, and is a sadder if not a wiser man. In vain the Press has told him not to mind two hundred and fifty millions—after all, not half the amount he spent in his death struggle with Napoleon the Great a century ago, a mere flea-bite, forsooth! for is he not ten times richer now, what with gold and diamond mines, etc., than he was then? etc., etc.

Nevertheless, John Bull is far from easy in his pocket or his mind. He has just enough wit to suspect that the Press is not always an image of truth, nor can he forget how egregiously their prophets misled him, or how merrily they raked in the merry harvest of halfpence with their "Echoes" and "Stars" and "Evening News," while they fattened like ghouls with equal delight upon the dismal record of blood of Boer or Briton alike, upon news false or true. One spasmodic effort he has made to bring the authors of his cruel deception to the bar of national justice; but even here the Press has gulled him and fooled him to the "top of his bent" by telling him that if even they, the omnipotent and all-knowing, were unable to foresee the trap into which the Boers had led us (which has indeed, to use the immortal words of Kruger, "staggered humanity") how could John Bull expect the innocent and harmless guardians of his purse and liberties to avert the calamities which have befallen us? Nay, has not even the philosophic Balfour explained that "we have always blundered, from the dawn of the world's history, and in all probability always shall," one of the finest national pronouncements in the person of our chief representative of stupidity and incompetence that the world has ever heard, or probably ever will hear.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### OUR POPULAR HEROES!

THEN uprises the champion of the loom, the workshop and the factory, the colossus of Birmingham whom John Bull, in his anguish, bluffed by the Government, pooh-pooed by Mr. Balfour, and mocked by the Press, now clasps about the knees, crying, "Sweet Joseph, defend me in my hour of need." Now, if anything is certain under heaven, it is that the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain was the prime cause, instigator and immediate author of the Boer War. This is no caricature, no far-fetched tale, nor even so much as exaggeration, but plain, simple, downright truth. The ex-minister of the Colonies is at this moment, without doubt, the hero of the hour. Ask any Briton why he is a popular idol, as I have asked hundreds of all ranks in life from peer to peasant, and he will probably tell you, "His language is so clear, his meaning so plain, and above all he hits so straight." After that can we complain that the foreigners call us a stupid people?

We are told, two thousand five hundred years ago, that Cleon the tanner's voice when he raised it in the public assembly could be heard from Athens to Sparta, and for that reason alone the populace followed his lead! It may be a far cry from the modern Babylon to Athens, but there is a very close kinship between democracies in all ages and in all times. Could a better satire be invented upon the folly of deliberately placing the power within the reach of the greater number, that is, the greater number of fools? By this I do not mean "fools" in the sense that the English use the word, that is, a man who cannot keep his money from his neighbour's grip, but men who know nothing, who think of nothing, who care for nothing that they cannot touch or eat—in short, who know nothing of the principles which govern State policy, and who necessarily follow men, not measures, for the simple reason that they think they know the men, but as for their measures, they neither know nor care to understand them.

From this we may pass to a brief review of our popular idols to see if we can throw any light upon these otherwise unintelligible phenomena.

Mr. Chamberlain's first appearance in the political arena, fresh from the triumphs of Birmingham municipal politics, was as the advocate, along with Mr. Trevelyan and Sir Charles Dilke, of the extreme Radical party. He desperately strove to frighten the Court and the Conservatives by the violence and virulence of his democratic sentiments, affecting a Republican attitude, which he assumed in various hostile speeches against Queen and Court, while he vainly attempted to curry favour and gain the confidence of the extreme Radical wing who were rapidly growing dissatisfied with Mr. Gladstone's more moderate tendencies. His first manœuvre was to expound the doctrine of "Ransom for the Rich," in the vain and delusive hope of tickling the ears of the extremists and, possibly, of succeeding to the Liberal lead upon the death of that eminent statesman. Unable, however, to cope with him openly, while professing to fight under his banner, his next plan seems to have been to detach slowly and patiently the extreme party from their allegiance to his banner by a profession of extreme Radicalism, relying upon undermining Mr. Gladstone's influence with the Nonconformists by strenuous declarations of Nonconformist sentiment, and a fervent adoption of their favourite hobbies, namely, educational and teetotal views, and above all by threatening a campaign in favour of the disestablishment of the English Church, which he believed would be the most effective means to the end which he really had at heart, to wit, the disestablishment of Mr. Gladstone.

His next move was to open a mine by which he sought to win over or delude the Agricultural party, by holding forth the promise to such as were foolish enough to listen to him or believe in him, of a kind of Mohammedan heaven in which the rawest agricultural labourer should, whatever his merit or industry, at least possess three acres and a cow. This speculation having fallen flat amid the profane laughter of the Conservatives and the scarce concealed contempt of those for whom he had professed so fervent a desire to benefit, the unhappy Joseph, deserted by his brethren, who by this time

had come to see through him all too well, soon found himself cast away into the political pit of isolation, out of which he perceived it was vain to expect to rise without changing his skin. His next move was, therefore, to take advantage of Mr. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule to desert his banner, and after eating up the various speeches and expressed opinions of old which seemed to interfere with his new excursion, proceeded to fawn upon the leaders of the opposite camp, and, after a brief season of reptile-like writhings of a dubious and grub-like existence, soon emerged as a full-fledged Conservative under the thin disguise of a Liberal Unionist till a decent interval had elapsed, when, casting off all Radical deception and Republican pretence, Joseph displayed himself in his natural colours of Court toady, popularity-hunter and aristocrat.

Having now come into the land of Egypt, fattening greatly upon the flesh-pots thereof, and richly indemnified for the title of Judas, with which he was greeted by the party he left, by the warm affection and sympathy of the Court and the aristocracy, Joseph soon drops every vestige of the Republican style and affects the dress, habits and language of the Court Sybarite, seldom appearing in public without an expensive cigar in his mouth, an eyeglass in his eye, and a costly orchid in his button-hole.

Once the terror of the Court and the unbending Cato who lifts his stern voice against the endowment of German princelets with a nation's money and opposes royal grants, he now becomes the willing servant of the Queen and her most devoted courtier, the trusted counsellor of dukes and the cherished guest of duchesses. Still there was a rift within the lute. He had captured the higher classes, but how about the lower with whom the real power resides? What of them? The rest might do for show and ornament. But Birmingham likes something substantial; he wants the beefsteak within as well as the shiny pie-crust without. His next step, therefore, is to make another last bid for popular favour, and, after two or three vain efforts at tinkering the Bankruptcy Laws, the Shipping Act, and a strong bid for the lost favour of the working men by an Accident Compensation Bill, Joseph begins to talk very loudly about a national system of old-age pension; and although it seemed absolutely incredible that a man who had spent his political life

in promising everything and achieving nothing should still be listened to, listened to he undoubtedly was, strange as is the tale. However, he could not talk for ever without doing something, so, after having set the working classes all agog, especially the idlest among them, to whom such a proposal was nothing short of a glimpse of Paradise, once more the ghost of a renascent popularity waxed and waned, with the discovery that the scheme was utterly impossible and involved an expenditure of something approaching 300 millions sterling. It was whispered even amongst Joseph's most devoted admirers that he would have done well to have paused before promising, and that this was indeed the last flicker of Joseph's lamp. Nothing of the kind. Joseph knew his England too well for that. As Colonial Secretary it was more than suspected that Joseph was guilty of secret collusion with Rhodes, and had tacitly consented that if the wild-cat scheme in which Jameson was destined to pull the chestnuts out of the fire proved successful, it was to receive the stamp of official favour. Unfortunately poor Jameson went off at half-cock; the scheme was ill-laid from first to last, and the finishing touch was given to England's disgrace not less by the intrinsic folly of the attempt than by the facility with which it was detected and extinguished. "Here comes the chance of a lifetime," thought Joseph in his innocence, believing that a successful sweep of England's mighty hand would easily tumble gold mines, diamond mines, Orange State, and Transvaal, like ripe apples, into her lap, if only a plausible device could be invented. The astute politician next laid a train, with the help of a willing Press, of British sympathy for the Outlander, a mythical being invented purely for strategic purposes, popularly described (*vide* penny papers) as endowed with a lofty sense of patriotism combined with a burning love for forensic fame, whom the cruel and licentious Boer had inhumanly deprived of his only pleasure in life by depriving him of a seat in the Councils of his adopted land. The Boers failing to jump at the proffered bait, there was nothing simpler for Joe than to send Kruger a warlike ultimatum, which Joseph proceeded to do with such abundant verbiage and insincerity as to make it even now a moot point whether he had framed the same for the purpose of inveigling the Boer or of affording himself a subsequent pretext

for denying that he had any share in a war which he had evidently hatched and fostered from the beginning.

If common sense ever had sway with Britons or ever affected their political calculations, the impartial spectator would suppose that nothing more unlikely could be dreamt of or imagined than that Joseph should have emerged as a popular favourite at the end of the Boer War. Yet such is the plain, certain, and undoubted fact.

While nothing seems more clear than Joseph's chief part in the transaction, from the moment that by his collusion, or at any rate sympathy with the Jameson raid the jealousy and suspicion of the Boers had been awakened; and, in view of the undoubted fact that the Colonial Minister, or, at all events, the extreme land-grabbing division under the name of Imperialists, of which he had constituted himself chief patron, were confessedly hungering for Boer soil—nothing was more natural than that the Burghers should arm and await with unshrinking patriotism the hour that was to bring them face to face with their relentless foes. Every despatch, every mail brought to the Colonial Office the tale of Creusot guns, Mauser ammunition and rifles packed in piano cases, of secret recruitings and private drillings at home and abroad in the secret recesses of their mountains as well as in the friendly territory of the Portuguese; yet not a complaint was uttered, not a step was taken; Joe was biding his time.

The plain man sees but one of two things, either that this boasted Imperialism, of which Joseph professes to be the leader, is an enormous fraud and sham, without meaning, head, or tail, designed only to gull Englishmen into abetting the follies and vagaries of would-be statesmen in order to perpetuate their name withal; or else that it should be directed to an effectual defence of its shores wherewith to guard itself against danger, and possess such machinery as will enable it to face events and be prepared for all contingencies. But instead of pressing his Government in the light of the military preparations of which he had full warning and knowledge, and which he well knew could be designed for the destruction of no other but their English neighbours, to take instant measures to repress, disarm, or crush them before their own armament and organization was completed—relying upon his own sagacity and superior wisdom, he smiled



complacently at the advice which poured in from a thousand quarters in the vain endeavour to awaken him to a sense of the coming thunder-cloud, and, with a fatuousness which would be incredible were it not proved to be true, calmly awaited the moment when he and his confederates should, by a course of gentle irritation, compel the Boer to take the first step towards an outbreak of hostilities which all well knew could not much longer be deferred, while firmly believing in common with the other incompetent wiseacres then juggling with the destinies of the Empire, that the war could be terminated in England's favour with scarce a perceptible exertion of military strength.

The next in popular favour is beyond all question General Sir Redvers Buller.

To recount General Buller's history seems quite unnecessary in view of the fact that his popularity and public distinction dates from the commencement of the Boer War, to which he was appointed Commander-in-Chief with full powers of dealing with the forces and material sent out to him in what manner he saw fit. Whether his appointment was a gross act of favouritism or whether it proceeded from a profound contempt of the enemy has never been clearly made out. Certain it is, as appears plainly from the evidence of the Royal Commission, that he was left with a perfectly free hand to do as he thought best and call out as many regiments of infantry as he deemed necessary; and, having already fought in Africa, he might be supposed to have some acquaintance with the geographical features of the country and the special character of the foe. No doubt there is much difference of opinion as to whether the whole blame of the non-success of the campaign in its earlier stages was due to him alone, or whether in part to his subordinates. There can be no question, however, that much valuable time was lost in determining the plan of campaign which the Royal Commission proves clearly had been originally settled on the same lines as was afterwards adopted by Lord Roberts, but was altered by General Buller in compliance with the urgent demands of Natal, resulting in a complete change of programme and a delay of several weeks in transporting the troops from the Cape to Natal, which naturally enabled the enemy to mass their forces around the Natal frontier and occupy passes which we ourselves should

otherwise have been able to occupy, and thus probably have been able to force the war into their own territory. The next step for which he is strongly blamed was the choice of Ladysmith as a centre of stores and ammunition and its selection as a military stronghold. Lord Wolseley, with that indifferent off-handedness which marked his evidence in the Royal Commission, disclaimed having been responsible for a mistake which he "never imagined anybody could possibly have committed." But it further transpires in the same Commission that whatever he may think now, he was well aware that the stores had been thrown into Ladysmith, and that he had only to raise a strong objection to have prevented that serious strategic mistake as to our forward advances which was so strongly blamed in the light of after events. It may here be well to add that the only wisdom and forethought of which the Royal Commission produces evidence may be fairly ascribed to that wisdom which we all possess after the event. The plain English of the whole business is simply that we had not the remotest idea that the Boers would turn out to be the gallant and skilful soldiers we subsequently found them to be in the field ; secondly, nothing was less expected than that they should plump their balls into our camp by the use of siege guns which they had dragged with astonishing patience and skill to the top of a commanding hill, while we, with our usual want of caution and forethought, were unprovided with any artillery possessing a range approaching their own. The third and capital blunder was the non-occupation on our side of the strong strategic line of the Tugela, with the inevitable result of being compelled to attack that strongly entrenched point ; and fourthly, Buller's manner of handling his troops upon that fateful occasion, when, after committing possibly every mistake that a commander could in sending his column over an unfordable river under full exposure of a closely entrenched enemy, and posting his artillery within range of the same with the result of losing all his gunners and horses ; and lastly, perhaps worst of all for the national credit and highly discouraging to the entire army, was his neglect to cover up these mistakes by pushing the battle home, since nothing takes the heart out of an army so much as a heavy loss incurred to no purpose without any resulting gain.

The foreign critics seem to be at one upon this latter item of

his indictment: the general opinion abroad being that he lost the battle because he lost his head.

We need not follow him through Spion Kop, a tissue of blunders which he, moreover, apparently strove to fix upon his subordinates, but which history will certainly ascribe, if not wholly, at all events principally, to the Commander-in-Chief.

Need we refer to the painful episode of the various telegrams in which General Buller, losing all heart after his first reverse at Colenso, told Sir George White, at Ladysmith, in plain English to fish for himself and make the best terms he could with the enemy as he (Buller) could do nothing for him.

Sir Redvers Buller's reward for his incompetency was to withdraw him from the scene in favour of General Roberts, and, as consolation, to appoint him to the command of the Second Division at Aldershot. Surely a singularly twentieth-century-British way of encouraging other officers similarly placed to exert themselves to the utmost for the credit of their country. However, by a singular intervention of retributive justice, a speech which he shortly afterwards made at a large public dinner emphasized with such distinctness his unfitness for command, that he was speedily relieved from further military exercises and restored to his Devonshire tenantry after he had done about as much harm to English prestige and military credit as any single man during the whole of the nineteenth century.

In the century before last it is more than probable that he would have been shot, and it is absolutely certain that he would have been tried for his life. If Admiral Byng was justly condemned to be shot because he saved his life along with that of the gallant fellows who stood by him when little more could have been gained by courting a watery grave, it is highly unlikely that General Buller would have escaped in those sterner and less sentimental days.

I have briefly alluded already to the disgraceful tale of mingled incapacity and folly of which Dr. Jameson was both the hero and the cat's-paw, and, without being a pro-Boer, I cannot but bear my unqualified share of testimony to the admirable manner in which that abortive and rash, if ridiculous, foray was promptly nipped in the bud by the superior skill and smartness of Kruger and Joubert, as well as to the magnanimity with

which they waived their undoubted right to hang them all on the nearest tree, an act which would have not only been in accordance with common practice, but also strictly in accordance with every known theory of poetic justice. Nor was the case improved, sickening and sordid as it was in every detail, by the clearly proved but dastardly attempt of the conspirators to mask their act of violence under the pretence "*of being called upon to rescue the women and children of Johannesburg.*" If Englishmen did not habitually do in the mass precisely what every single Englishman abhors and loathes, one would marvel at Dr. Jameson's and his fellow-raiders' popularity surviving such incidents as these. Again, if his popularity could be attributed to his unblemished character as a man and a benevolent physician, as it was in the early days of Kimberley, or if one could imagine that Buller's sudden popularity was merely late in blossoming forth and was really the result of his gallant act of saving life when he won the Victoria Cross by saving a comrade out of an Indian river, there might be some way out of the difficulty, but alas! I fear that the explanation is to be found in the blatant and conspicuous follies of democracy, who— invariably prone if possible "to get hold of the wrong end of the stick"—are led by the first straw of fancy that crosses their path, and, as soon as their interest or passion is involved, rush madly ahead, looking neither to the right nor the left until, like the swine of the Gadarenes, they drown themselves in the sea of their own folly.

Verily, wondrous are the ways of the British People. When I was a young man about town, nothing was further from my thoughts and remoter from my suspicions than a deep and abiding loyalty for the then Prince of Wales. The first indication I had of the existence of such a sentiment was his enthusiastic reception upon occasion of the historic *Te Deum* sung in St. Paul's, in honour of his recovery from typhoid fever. Up to that time, whether in public or in private, he was referred to with a certain good-humoured tolerance such as the British generally accord to their Princes. When resolutions of a distinctly Republican character were brought on in Parliament, in which allusions were made to the excessive expenditure of the Prince of Wales, and invidious comparisons drawn between the cost of a Monarchy,

and a Republic, the feeling against such opinions was tolerant and dispassionate, and current opinion was divided as to whether, at the rate democratic views were then advancing, the Prince of Wales would succeed to the throne.

Possibly, the whole machinery of enthusiastic grief for his illness and delight for his recovery was negotiated for, managed, carried out and handsomely paid for, by her late Majesty Queen Victoria, in order to revive the failing fortunes of the Guelphs. At any rate, such is the only alternative explanation that I am able to offer for the surprising phenomena exhibited. Manifestly, the Press reaped an abundant harvest. Like the foul birds of prey that scent carrion from afar, they crawled or hovered around his bedside at Scarborough, and produced their special bulletins and royal evening news, true or false, by the million. Perhaps it was merely a "new excitement" that kept the public on the tip-top of expectation; and when the crisis had come and gone, and the Prince was plucked from the very jaws of death, the revulsion of feeling may have occasioned in an excitable people that sudden relaxation of nervous tension, which in hysterical subjects turns to laughter or tears. Whatever the cause, such are the facts, which I leave to my readers to fit in as best they may.

I have before alluded to the gradual change of the English people during the last 100 years from a beer-drinking to a tea-drinking people, as having had a marked effect upon their temperament and conduct. If there were anything in the British character generally which pointed to abnormal altruism or excessive sensitiveness, or a disposition to mysticism, or that worship of abstract qualities, with which we credit the Greeks of their earlier Republic, it might be possible to explain the phenomena of popular outbreaks of excitement almost amounting to frenzy, such as the last half of the century witnessed when the Prince of Wales proceeded to St. Paul's to give thanks for his recovery, or, for example, on the occasion when Garibaldi dined at the Mansion House. Though I yield to no man in my admiration for that rough and rugged patriot, the theatrical exhibition of his person in a slouch hat and the familiar red flannel shirt in the barouche of an adoring Duchess, after the style of Captain Webb or Sandow at the Aquarium, surrounded

by a frantic, yelling crowd, trampling each other for the honour of kissing his hand, presented an exhibition which was, to say the least, humiliating to every true lover of his country.

Nor is it possible to predict the ways and means of British popular favour, or estimate the complex mixture of facts, fiction, and folly which go to make up a popular reputation after death. Take for example that astute Hebrew, the Dizzy of my early days, and the Beaconsfield of the present generation. It was early in the 50's when Dizzy—already then past middle age—was beginning to emerge from the chrysalis stage of almost universal loathing and contempt, aggravated, in his desperate attempt to secure notoriety, by a more than usual Hebraic vulgarity of dress, and to earn the fear, if not the esteem, of his fellow-members of Parliament by his keen and caustic wit and his bold and venomous tongue. At length the moment came to realise his long pent-up ambition. Stung to madness by their defeat at the hands of the Liberals, and still more at the defection of their once fervent ally, Sir Robert Peel, the Tories found an apt mouthpiece in Benjamin Disraeli. All the pent-up venom and compressed spleen of thirty years of suppression and opprobrium was poured forth in the service of a party who felt keenly, but could not express adequately, their disgust and indignation for the leader who had, as they considered, betrayed and abandoned their cause.

From being the hired assassin of the Tories to making himself necessary to them was but a step. Upon the death of Lord Derby, to grasp at the Leadership he had so ardently waited for and so patiently schemed, led on naturally to that perennial duel with Gladstone upon which he had so eagerly entered, and carried on with such virulence and success, that the Tory party soon perceived that Dizzy was the only man who could devise effective stumbling-blocks to check the great demagogue in his wild career.

It would be idle to recount how the Tories gradually found out to their grief and pain that Dizzy, once seated, could not easily be dislodged. His next step was to checkmate Gladstone and the enthusiastic Liberals—who were burning to redress the people's wrongs (as they imagined) by extending the Franchise—in outbidding them with an even more liberal measure of

enfranchisement than the one proposed by the opposite side. This was the commencement of Dizzy's system of auction in politics, and one in every way worthy of the commercial instincts of a Hebrew premier.

When Dizzy's master and Prime Minister, Lord Derby, who had hitherto enjoyed the highest reputation for straightforward and honourable conduct, was reproached with having listened to the voice of the serpent and cast his opinions and pledges to the wind in offering so radical a measure as the extension of the Franchise, it must be recorded as an instance of how deeply "Evil communications corrupt good manners," that he is reported to have justified that base action by "the satisfaction of dishing the Whigs," than which surely a more immoral sentiment never emanated from Jew or Christian!

Having wormed himself into the confidence of the Queen and won her heart by those flatteries which the Italian-bred Jew knew so well how to administer when advancement or interest called for its use, his next move was to give practical effect to that Oriental gaudiness and vulgarity—which in early youth excited the astonishment and contempt of his warmest admirers, and caused him in middle age to amuse and amaze all beholders with his garish attire and still gaudier oratory—by adding to the historical title of Queen of England the upstart denomination of Empress of India!

But what proved the finest stroke of Oriental display, accompanied with a blatant vulgarity which one might have hoped would have only appealed to the lowest and most servile ranks of a servile nation, was Dizzy's performance as plenipotentiary at the Paris Conference, where, after an incredible amount of swagger about what England was going to do to frighten the Russians from taking possession of Constantinople, ending in a show parade of the Mediterranean fleet in the Bosphorus, he not only artfully concealed the disgrace and exposure with which he was threatened upon his return home in consequence of the discovery that he had attended the Conference with his hands tied by a private and secret convention with Turkey that if she would give up Cyprus to us, England would refuse to abet the other powers in their determination to compel Turkey to ways of decency and civilisation—but he had the

astonishing effrontery to glorify himself therein as having caused England to triumph at the Conference over her assembled rivals and as having brought them back an Island which he represented to be a valuable naval base in the Mediterranean to protect the interests of Egypt and the Suez Canal (a fable which it seems now almost incredible that his most ardent admirers should have dared to support), crowning all by a self-gratulatory speech, in his best histrionic style, ending in the famous declaration that he had brought back "Peace with Honour!"

Some years ago, walking through Parliament Square, Westminster, I was attracted by a dense crowd of all classes, male and female, of whom a large number, apparently well-dressed and respectable, were waiting their turn to file past a statue of Benjamin Disraeli and present their floral offerings and wreaths, precisely as the peasants in Southern Italy decorate their patron saint's statue on May-day with primroses and violets. A more ludicrous spectacle I never saw than the grimy, soot-smearred bronze surmounted by the Mephistophelian face, with the familiar saturnine smile and historic curl, swathed about the body with wreaths and garlands, looking exceedingly like a half-clothed Kaffir, black above, and yellow below. Round about the base of the statue were huge shields with "Peace with Honour," "Our Empire," and other familiar legends. One almost expected the cynical smile to break out upon his grim face at this scene of human folly, which none more than he had so often mercilessly ridiculed.

"'Ere's yer Empire wreaths, yer h'Empire badges and yer primroses." A particularly brawny, noisy ruffian with a large basket of primroses, on being mildly asked, "Who the gentleman might be with the primrose apron," instantly answered, in a tone of indignation, "Why, don't yer know! that's the Hurl of Beaconsfield, him as built the 'h'Empire.'" "What, the one in Leicester Square?" "To be sure, where helse should it be?" "These be thy gods, O Israel."

Three hundred years ago the lasses of London flocked to Charing Cross to lay their primroses at the Virgin's feet. We have disestablished the Virgin Mary, but we still have Saint Dizzy to worship. We have abolished the worship of Saint Joseph, but we are doing our best to canonize "Brummagen Jo,"



and, at the rate we are going, it will be a miracle if we do not succeed. Then shall we see Joseph with his nose turned heavenwards as if seeking new Empires to conquer, eye-glass in eye, and the never-failing orchid in his coat. But how about *his* favourite flower? Never mind, we shall all be so rich through Protection—except those who will be too poor to stay in the country—that we shall never grudge the expense.

It is a far cry from Dizzy, twice Prime Minister of England, to Little Tich. Nevertheless, I am assured that if he were to stand for Westminster, and Dan Leno or the White-Eyed Kaffir were not to stand in his way, his popularity is such that he would have every chance of being elected: and for my part I would just as soon vote for him as the average briefless barrister who, having nothing particular to do, is sent down to a constituency with Mr. Balfour's blessing, and a short but firm request from the Head Wire-Puller of his Party, that he may be elected with all despatch. I am not sure, however, that the late Fred Archer would not have run him very close, being the hottest popular favourite that I can recollect in these last forty years. But it would be idle to weigh their respective merits or to dive into the secrets of the popular breast, since Democracy, being a female, must not be too closely pryed into, or her actions too closely scrutinised.

We all know how little it takes to start a woman's love, but when once started (never mind how) there is no limit to its course. It may be a curl on the forehead or a well-varnished boot, a cock of the eye or a lovely moustache. So it is with Democracy—false, fickle, and unfair—all rolled into one.

I cannot forbear from closing these remarks with the apostrophe of the "Good Lord Shaftesbury," whose name is a household word wherever English men and women have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel—when he first heard of the renowned Dizzy being called to the premiership:

"Disraeli, Prime Minister! He is a Hebrew; this is a good thing. He is a man sprung from an inferior station; another good thing in these days, as showing the liberality of our institutions. 'But he is a "leper"' without principle, without feeling, without regard to anything human or divine beyond his own personal ambition. He has dragged, and will continue to drag, everything that is good, safe and venerable, and solid through the dust and dirt of his own objects."

(Letter—LORD SHAFTESBURY, in 1868.)

## CHAPTER XXIV

### OUR POPULAR FAVOURITES

POPULAR favourites may be broadly divided into heroes of the Press and heroes of the people.

In literature the people's favourites who hold their ground, as, for example, Dickens and Tennyson, without the help of, or in spite of, the Press, are usually men of genuine merit. Mere merit has no influence one way or the other in determining whether an author or poet shall become a popular favourite or otherwise. As often as not a kind of unreasoning obstinacy impels the reader of light literature to go directly in the teeth of the Press and the critics, while there are other writers equally highly gifted, who make no way whatever in popular estimation. As a general rule the popular taste is not only erratic but incomprehensible, since no man has ever attempted to gauge or lay down either its laws or its likes and dislikes. Authors who are connected with journalism—and can, therefore, command an enormous amount of cheap “criticism” and unpaid advertisement—reach astonishing heights of popularity at first, since the public is always ready, however often deceived, to swallow the bait of a seductive puff. This transient glamour, however, does not last long, and the man who wakes to find himself famous, or, in other words, has induced the morning papers for hard cash or otherwise to tell their readers that he is the man of the century, is too apt to go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. Not that I mean by this that he will be taken up by the public and then dropped for the excellent reason that there is nothing in him, or that the little he has to say will just go far enough to fill one book and no more; for the special peculiarity of the Briton is that unreasoning fidelity to the object of his admiration (better named stupidity) which never fails to astonish foreigners beyond anything else. Hence it comes, as regards books, poems, paintings, hotels, restaurants, or any other known production of human labour, that any impostor, once firmly established, may play any trick he chooses or belie his original talent to any extent, and the British public is sure to go on buying

his productions, belauding and bellowing over him until the hour of his death. Moreover, in all probability, the name of the novel, or possibly even its binding and the colour thereof, and certainly to a very great extent the eccentricity or any marked peculiarity of the name of its author, such as "Rudyard Kipling," or "Rider Haggard," will often have quite as much influence upon the sale of a book, or the popularity of its author, as any intrinsic merit possessed by their works.

No more desperate efforts were ever made to boom a fellow-journalist than fell to the lot of Mark Twain or Bret Harte at the hands of the American Press, and singularly enough the fulsome-ness of their praise, which would have turned the stomach of a crocodile, generated a kind of false appetite for their ephemeral trash which had been originally poured out in the comic columns of Californian newspapers. English light literature was instantly flooded, and for a time almost swamped, with the refuse of the Yankee comic newspapers in book form to satisfy this new-born taste, which in its turn stimulated an increased demand and a crop of imitators of the Artemus Ward, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain\* variety of humour, chiefly consisting in a hash of bad spelling, Yankee phrases, and gutter slang, mixed in equal proportions and served up to suit popular taste.

A desperate newspaper attempt was similarly made to dub a writer of barrack-room songs the "Poet of the Empire," whose title to distinction is apparently based upon the fact of his having given the name of "Tommy Atkins" to the British soldier, and having written some doggerel rhymes with a strong Indian-cantonment-cum-guard-room flavour, interlarded with Hindustanee phrases, whose jingle seems to please the public by its unusual sound, and its absence of point or meaning. As to the title of "Tommy Atkins," for my part I have never been able to understand where the wit comes in, or how it is that the British soldier tamely submits to be typified under that childish if uneuphonious denomination; while it appears to me to speak volumes for the good temper and easy-going disposition of the lower ranks of the British Army, that such journalistic liberties are met with indifference rather than active resentment.

\*As this book goes to press I read that the authors of "The Innocents Abroad" and "Tommy Atkins" have been canonised by Oxford University! Was it for "cash down," or at the bidding of the *Daily Mail*? Alas! poor Oxford. No wonder there is a cry for reform!

I have seldom been more wounded in my national self-love than at a widely-announced concert upon the Continent, where the *prima donna* was to sing the latest production of the "Poet of the Empire." Naturally, after so much flourish of trumpets and expectation, we had hoped that the poem would not be altogether unworthy of the theme and the occasion. I will say nothing of the music, which seemed to be neither better nor worse than the words, but, with respect to the words, I failed to gather anything tangible except a not too tasteful allusion to "Cooks' sons" and "Dukes' sons" coupled with an exhortation to "pay, pay, pay." The inferences drawn as to the average quality of our national poetry, of which not a few foreigners present were unhappily as well qualified to judge as ourselves, was of a kind which, however varied the terms used, were far from pleasant to British ears, or flattering to British intelligence.

A striking proof of the want of connection between the intrinsic merit and popularity of British songs was brought before public notice in the course of a trial some years ago where copyrights were in question. One of the suitors, a hero of the music-halls, called "The Great Vance," pleaded guilty to the perpetration of several music-hall abominations, of which he variously estimated the value in succession. "But was not your most successful song something about 'Jolly Dogs'?" said the cross-examining counsel. "Oh, but that was long ago," said the great man apologetically, "it was the worst song I ever wrote." "All the same, it brought you in more money than any of them, did it not?" "Well, perhaps it did."

Perhaps the most painful and depressing spectacle to one who is proud of his country is to see the recrudescence of American taste upon the stage and the music-hall—the Press, comic and serious—the bookstall and circulating library. Had the United States made notorious progress in art, letters, and music during the last half century—even then there would be a certain humiliation in witnessing the universal invasion of Yankee phraseology, style, and manners, upon every stage and bookstall. But since the very reverse is nearer the truth, and, with the exception of a marked improvement in the direction of engraving and design, her native progress in music, art, and literature, has been infinitesimal compared with her population and wealth, I can see no explanation, except that we are rapidly approaching dotage,

for the prevalence of American work and the undoubted popularity with which not only her actors and actresses, but her successful dramatic novelties, dances, and other "Yankee notions" generally, are received by the people of this country.

No doubt this condition of things is greatly due to reciprocal commercial relations between the Press of the two countries. As I have before explained, the Press in America and England may be regarded as a joint commercial concern for buying and selling public opinion in the two countries to the highest advantage of those engaged in the traffic. Probably much more American and Hebrew money is invested in this manner than English; and if any marked inferiority in grammar and composition be the natural result, it is fully made up for by the predominance of American and Jewish writers and their exceptional powers of co-operation and acuteness for turning journalism to commercial use.

The solidarity between the Press of England and the United States is fast becoming so complete and the strings are drawn together so closely, and, however much they affect to deny it, their ever-growing cosmopolitanism, or, in other words, the subservience of public interests and patriotism in both countries to the prime purpose of financial strategy, has attained such heights in these days, that while it clearly explains the enormous power that it possesses for "dumping" upon us American comic, literary, and theatrical refuse, undoubtedly constitutes one of the most powerful barriers against the formation of "good taste" in either of the countries affected.

An American critic might object that a nation whose upper classes testify such unbounded delight in such productions as "Lord Dundreary," or "Charley's Aunt," cannot afford to turn up their noses at the latest imbecility from "Niblo," or "Wallack's"! Still, while I am free to confess that good taste is as foreign to the soil of Britain as that of the United States, I contend that our self-respect as members of the parent nation should at least "assume a virtue if we have it not," and decline, in spite of the delicate persuasions of the Press, to be flooded with Yankee productions, or to believe that a play or novel must necessarily succeed here because it succeeded "over there." To expect good taste from a people whose leisured classes are so dissatisfied with

their own society and surroundings that they bring up their children, if they can, in Europe, and, where possible, either import a thoroughly European atmosphere back with them to the States, or else take up their residence in Europe for good and all, would, indeed, be to look for grapes on thistles! It would be little short of a miracle if the commercially-bred native-born Yankees, of whom the older and more refined sections regard the theatre with Puritanic suspicion and distaste, or the foreign half-breeds, descending originally from the scum of the world—should exhibit a refined or cultivated taste in the choice of their theatrical or literary diversions—still less produce entertainments which should satisfy the older, and presumably more refined and cultivated, countries from which they sprang.

Forty or fifty years ago the nigger melodies of the United States were the "rage" of London. The original melodies and plantation dances upon which they were founded, which in their turn brought out a crowd of imitators, and to which musicians of considerable merit were not ashamed to contribute, had already in the middle of the nineteenth century captured the popular taste of the United States and thence travelled to England, being introduced to the public by a troop of spurious niggers, singing for the most part spurious music written chiefly by the ordinary ballad-singers of the day after what they believed to be the nigger style of melody, covered by a thin veneer of nigger humour and sentiment.

It is probably needless to remark that while all novelties, musical or otherwise, are sure to tickle British popular fancy for a time in proportion to their taste, or want of taste, to speak more truly, it is certain that none but a people in a low or primitive stage of musical perception would long be delighted by such barbaric or elementary "concord of sounds," consisting as it does mainly in rhythm, or striking measures of time, rather than melody or combinations of harmony. That such music should "catch on" as the Yankees term it, in the States, is but natural; but that after thirty years of comparative neglect of the original Christy Minstrel ballads, closely patterned as they were upon the genuine productions of the African slave in the cotton plantations of Alabama and Carolina, it is surely a sign of pitiful backsliding for not only the music-halls, but—by an ominous progression which is unknown in other countries, namely from gutter to palace

instead of the reverse—the highest classes as well as the lowest, after glutting their refined ears during the last lustrum with the senseless inanities of Costerdom, have now and for several years past reserved whatever enthusiasm their languid condition will permit, for the still more imbecile utterances of a kind of Nigger-Music-hall revival, which they term “coon songs.” The significant feature of the case lies in the fact that in strict imitation of the American managers who found that an indifferent song could be eked out by a German or Irish accent or the black face of a nigger so as to procure a comparative success (as it probably would in the nursery), our English managers, nothing loath to profit by their example, hit off the British taste so effectually with spurious nigger-songs full of drivel about “coons and moons” and what not, that orders were instantly given for a dozen or more weak imitations of the same to be produced, all of which are as unlike in language, manner, and character to African melody as anything that can possibly be conceived; while as the word “coon” appeared to be the feature which explained its otherwise incomprehensible popularity, that same magic word was necessarily introduced into all the succeeding songs so ordered, in spite of the fact that the term “coon,” however dear to the Carolina nigger as an animal to hunt or to eat, is, as a term of endearment, a word wholly unknown in the nigger vocabulary!

I have remarked that the observant foreigner invariably wants to know why our holiday places of resort, racecourses, and seaside towns are thronged with itinerant minstrels who insist on blacking their faces when they perform the latest music-hall inanity, and dance the latest music-hall step. The only answer that can be given is that Britons take such a long time to get anything into their head, and, when once in, it sticks so long, that having vaguely heard that a certain Company, called “Christy Minstrels,” had delighted their fathers or grandfathers by their black faces, striped calico clothes, curious antics, and plantation songs, the tradition is so tenacious among them, and a name, however antiquated, has such sway over us Britons, that even now nigger minstrels hold the field against all comers. Operettas, burlesques, farces, pantomimes, have passed away in fact and substance beyond all possibility of recall, nevertheless the names are still used and still attract crowded houses by the sheer force

of an attraction which has long ago ceased, and of which the present performances are unreal shadows. For such is the slavish adherence of the British public to the idols of the past, and such his cowardice to assert his likes and dislikes, that he will tamely and cheerfully submit to performances which do not amuse him, and subscribe to impostures which he sees through and despises, as if he hugged the chains under which he secretly groans. Is not this but another manifestation of that servility to habit or disinclination to reform which is at the same time our weakness and our boast?

This brings us by a natural sequence of thought to a recent disturbance in Wyndham's Theatre which the papers have been duly recording, and which singularly emphasises the views I have been setting forth respecting the slavish tendency of the British Public to "shut their eyes and open their mouths" and take what the managers give them.

Nothing is more clearly understood and admitted in every country, from Timbuctoo to St. Petersburg inclusive, except in that country where Britons declare they "never, never, never will be slaves," than the absolute right of the play or concert-goer to reject or approve the entertainment for which he pays, and, what is more, to express it in as forcible a manner as he sees fit short of personal violence. I have actually seen a cabbage despatched with such force and precision as to knock a man off his balance to the imminent risk of a fall through a side-scene amid a howling babel of well-deserved derision. It is not unusual abroad to see a play frequently interrupted or even altogether suspended: and I once saw an Italian audience rise up and refuse to allow a singer to proceed, drowning his voice with the polite injunction of "Fuori, fuori" (get out), refusing to be pacified until the singer had departed and their favourite tenor had been produced in his place.

Two peculiarities seem strongly to favour those who attempt to impose upon honest John Bull. One of his most conspicuous qualities is the dislike to put himself forward or to take the lead in anything, unless elected to that end—modesty in putting oneself forward being a special characteristic of the Englishman as well as a cardinal rule of social conduct. His second peculiarity is an egregious respect for authority, police, etc., and



inordinate "mauvaise honte" as the French call it, or fear of personal ridicule. This it is that makes Englishmen so stiff and stilted in society, and strongly contradistinguishes them from all others. It is the overpowering dread of doing something that is not correct, which banishes all natural action, sentiment, or speech among Englishmen of all classes.

To return to our muttons, however, contrary to what is usual in England, where the tamest toleration is usually displayed towards the most pitiable exhibitions of dramatic drivel and histrionic futility, it seems that the gallery being, as it might well be, dissatisfied with the quality of the fare afforded, expressed its displeasure by certain comments which so enraged the proprietor, Sir Charles Wyndham (whose recent elevation seems to have had the effect upon him, as the vulgar say, of a swollen head), that he was induced to exchange bad words with the disturbers, and, what is more to the purpose, succeeded in inducing a policeman (quite illegally, as I believe) to charge one of the noisiest of the dissentients at the Police Courts with rioting and breach of the peace, for which he was "bound over" upon the following day by the magistrate. I can only say in the most emphatic manner that if the Higher Courts sustain this view, which I greatly doubt, the words of the immortal Bumble that the "Law is a Hass" are more than amply justified. It is surely a gross caricature of our boasted liberties if playgoers should be unable to express their dislike or contempt of the performance for which they pay in any manner they think fit except by personal violence! I am myself a lover of the drama, and take great pleasure in frequenting the theatre in whatever country I live, but, with the exception of a Shakespearian revival or two which through the declining good taste of English playgoers invariably proves a dead loss to the managers, I cannot remember having seen anything on the British Stage which might not have been far more appropriately hissed off (and in most other countries undoubtedly would be), since the remote days of the graceful, if namby-pamby, burlesque operettas set to pleasing melodies, which, while possessing no dramatic merit whatever, unlike the so-called plays of to-day were neither conspicuous for their vulgarity nor insulting to the playgoers' intelligence by their total absence of fun or wit.

The slightest reflection must show that if the Law steps in to take away the only means that the public possess by which they can express their free and spontaneous opinion of the merits or demerits of entertainments provided, a double injury is inflicted upon the community—first, by enabling the manager or actor to call in the Law in defence of whatever rubbish he may think fit to inflict upon his helpless hearers; secondly, by placing an artificial impediment upon free and open competition by the establishment of a law-aided monopoly, which has practically the effect of driving better work out of the field.

#### SHOPKEEPERS.

The transition from this to what seems to be the manifest effect of British Municipal Laws in encouraging fraud and rascality brings us by easy steps from the Stage to the Shopkeeper.

I may at once give it as my solemn and earnest opinion that, after having spent the best years of my life in foreign countries, it is my painful duty to state that the traveller with a well-filled purse stands in greater danger of being beguiled of his cash and plundered without mercy or remedy in New Bond Street than in Central Asia, Central Africa, Central and South America, or Oceania. This is the more worthy of remark and notice in my case, from the fact that during many years' residence in Southern and Central America and Mexico (whose inhabitants all English writers concur in placing as low as any people of the world in morality and commercial honesty), although necessity compelled me to defend my own interests, being as I was in a position of total isolation and for the most part engaged in buying and selling horses and mules and undertaking enterprises demanding both credit and local co-operation, and while in Bolivia, deprived even of the advantage of diplomatic protection, I can truly say that during all the years I spent in South American countries—though twice robbed and plundered by violence—I have not met with so much and so many varied forms of human roguery as I met with during the first year that I spent in England after I came into possession of my estates! Moreover the difference is the more marked, and the discount, so to speak, to take off the English side in this comparison is the greater by this—that in

the former instance I was comparatively a poor man thrown entirely upon my own resources in a strange land, with scarcely any introductions, and pursuing methods for obtaining rather than conferring wealth, while on attaining possession of my estates, my financial relations assumed a totally opposite character; for instead of striving to acquire, I was wholly occupied in expending large sums of money, in contracts for furnishing, building repairs, and the construction of various important works.

I do not pretend precisely to know how foreigners are struck by the commercial relations which they enter into in this country. There is no subject upon which they show a more polite reserve than upon this: and, whenever pressed, they seem to take refuge in vague generalities. As to Europeans generally, it is astonishing how little they buy in England unless it is boots, clothes, and watches, the more florid taste prevalent on the Continent proving a bar to any great expenditure of money on objects of domestic or decorative character. The purely business men I have met, who come as buyers from Hamburg, Frankfort and Paris, are exceedingly reticent about their opinions in regard to the honesty and commercial integrity of those with whom they deal, but all agree that for quickness and despatch Englishmen must unquestionably be placed in the first rank.

As to our suicidal commercial practices, of which I have seen such strong evidence along the whole length of the Pacific Coast from Acapulco to Talcahuano, and from Buenos Ayres to Vera Cruz on the Atlantic side, I have myself seen our calicoes and shirtings gradually displaced by the Americans (through the roguery of our manufacturers in loading their wares with fraudulent adulterations of every kind), and Sheffield knives and hardware of all kinds successively give way to American, French, and German, by reason of their growing inferiority and the preference naturally extended to serviceable articles, over our inferior, if cheaper, manufactures. I have also seen South Bolivia seized by Germans, driving out English trade through their perseverance, their accurate methods, and their close attention to business and the wants of the inhabitants; and the Huddersfield and West Yorkshire looms, which formerly produced

nearly all the bayete or plush of Ecuador, superseded by their enterprising German rivals: while in the Chinese Sea from Singapore to Tientsin I have watched the successful invasion of the German and American element owing to the luxurious idleness of the careless, ill-taught, pleasure-loving Britons, who once held the commerce of those lands almost without effective opposition.

The same painful story I could tell of the Pacific Ocean, from Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands, and Yokohama and Yedo in Japan, to the Southern Pacific Islands of Otaheite, Samoa, New Hebrides, Fiji, and the Friendly Islands, round to Auckland in New Zealand, and in Sydney in Australia. It is ever the same sad story of Englishmen being pushed out by the inferiority of their wares and their growing tendency to sacrifice efficiency to cheapness, the carelessness of their travellers, and the general slackness of their efforts to retain their supremacy against German and American competition. These reasons alone should be quite sufficient, one would imagine, to explain the state of things which Mr. Chamberlain so bitterly laments, and which, under his fervid but partial exposition, has deeply touched, not to say alarmed, the conscience of the people.

Let us pull ourselves together like men, show ourselves worthy of our antique honesty, our reputation of old for straightforwardness and integrity, and bear in mind the well-known Greek fable of the tortoise and the hare. Though we had the first start in the race of commerce, let us not forget that the race is not always to the swiftest, but to the man who watches his opponent and takes every care to secure the victory. Above all let us remember that while other nations have been for these seventy years or more remodelling their systems of education and fomenting technical schools and the strict application of science to industry under government aid and control, their governments lending assistance by consular reports and other methods to develop commerce by every means that modern science or instruction can devise, we alone of nations are but recently with difficulty awakened to the disgraceful chaos into which our greatest educational institutions had fallen by corruption and long-established abuses, and failed to take any steps to reform public elementary education until the gutter children and savages of our

great cities so lately as thirty years ago had become a menace to our civilisation and a by-word among the nations.

No doubt it is a moot point among legists how far Laws influence human conduct. Many have said that a nation obtains the Laws which she deserves. But I am strongly inclined to believe by a comparison of the Laws of various countries that you may judge of the morality of the country by the Laws under which they live. How much more, then, must the Laws influence Englishmen when it is admitted on all hands that Englishmen have more respect for Law and Order than any living people. A mob of Englishmen is more easily contained by a couple of policemen than an equal mob of Spaniards, Frenchmen or Italians by a regiment of Grenadiers!

I boldly assert that there is nothing in the history, character, or temper of the Englishman which induces a belief in their inherent and original immorality in relations of business as compared with other nations, while at the same time I maintain that no one who carefully follows the conduct of business disputes, the prosecution of fraud, and the verdicts of our Law Courts, can dispute the fact, that the trend and teaching of the Law is wholly in the direction of fraudulent dealing and immorality. Besides the direct teaching and incitement of the Law, which instructs the least observant how to avoid the meshes of detection and to escape disgrace in prosecutions for fraud and roguery, the system of Anonymity, which has received great extension by the conversion of small "businesses" into large; and the destruction of the retail trader in favour of the "General Store" of American extraction, has tended to make the character of all business more impersonal. Next, the customer being brought less in contact with the responsible head of the firm or workshop, a strong tendency has grown up to adopt the methods of public companies, which latter tend in their turn, apparently from the weakness of Company Law and the ever-growing variety of Company Swindles, to draw the criminal population from the race-course and gambling hell into the more profitable if less congenial atmosphere of the city; and thirdly, the system of paying commission to successful salesmen, which has the effect of delegating the responsibility and oversight of a principal, to the tender mercies of an ill-paid schemer without position or

education—these and other causes conspire to produce a state of things which is forcibly pictured to the public day by day in the Press, and cannot but react unfavourably upon commercial honesty, as well as operate in deterring intending purchasers from spending their money in a country where the Law offers such inefficient protection against fraud and imposture.

Nor are the teachings of the Law thrown away upon the working classes. Where is now the British workman of whose skill, fidelity and industry we used to hear so much at home and abroad? Ask of the Trades' Unions, the pothouse politicians and the Labour Members! Pampered by vote-seeking Ministers, flattered by interested demagogues—his children educated gratis—his taxes remitted—his wages secured to him however great his incapacity—his worst offences condoned by indulgent judges, with an eye on the penny papers—his deserted wife or neglected children fed and clothed by a hundred charitable sympathisers—is he not truly our lord and master, before whom all bow down and worship?

It will be a bad day for the English workman when capitalists, abroad as well as in England, have so completely lost their confidence in him that they prefer to take up contracts in France, Germany, Belgium, and Italy—as thousands do already—rather than commit themselves to the tender mercies of British workmen, architects, engineers and surveyors, more especially when the conviction has taken root among them that no effectual protection can be looked for by employers of labour, when the Law comes to be invoked in their relief.

## CHAPTER XXV

### “BUSINESS,” AMONG “A NATION OF SHOPKEEPERS”

I KNOW no more conspicuous instance of collective British stupidity than the indifference among the English landed and upper classes generally to the imperative necessity for a business and legal training for our youth.

To listen to the Press and the scribbling fraternity one would suppose that there was nothing more simple than to manage a farm profitably, to make money by breeding cart- or race-horses, or to manage a large estate. Nor have I ever seen any indications among the trash which passes for literature and informs the millions, that the conduct of a large estate—involving as it does enormous personal responsibility towards a large body of tenantry, the decision of continual feuds or disputes between neighbours and numberless contracts of every kind involving every department of engineering and surveying art—was a matter of greater difficulty, or that more judgment was required or a more extensive training and higher qualifications for its due administration, than that of the millionaire whose fortune is invested in Three per Cents., whose possession involves no graver care or thought than how to get rid of it in a manner that will advance his interests, or buy him a place in good society.

Now since the total number of considerable landowners, according to the Government returns, are about ten thousand, it follows that at all events three or four times that amount must devote their energies, and will be closely attached to, the management of such estates as they are connected with, or will emigrate and attempt sheep-farming or horse-raising or other pursuits kindred to those in which they have been bred up, which altogether must form a very large section of the upper classes for whom the leading public schools are primarily intended. Yet incredible as is the fact, and damning as is the confession to our national vanity, our tendency to the “happy-go-lucky,”

coupled with a rigid adherence to old methods, is carried to such a point, that up till quite lately none of the public schools have thought fit to set down as an object of study those branches of instruction which are likely to qualify a boy to successfully cope with the difficulties and risks of such a career.

Probably the next largest contingent, if not in these democratic days an ever-growing proportion of the frequenters of these schools, are the sons of men who have made their money in commerce, and who have to look to the due conduct of their parents' business or industry in the future for a continuance of the wealth and influence they enjoy. From my own experience I should say that at the present time the latter class was the larger of the two, and was increasing in proportion to the landed; while a minority of from a sixth to an eighth are destined to make their way in life through the legal and other "genteel" professions in which no doubt a business education, however useful, is not of absolute and paramount importance. According to this calculation it is clear that more than three-fourths of the inmates of our great public schools, however necessary it may be that as educated men they should obtain a fair knowledge of French and German, and sufficient Greek and Latin and History to understand their own language and appreciate their own history and literature, should above all and before all at the earliest possible age be thoroughly indoctrinated with the highest and best methods of business and of such branches of elementary civil and banking law as tend to elucidate and explain its leading features and constitution; add to this a thorough knowledge of the grounds and definitions of the Law of Contract, the terminology of Business, and of Common Law, and, as far as may be, the Practice and Exercise of foreign Exchange, Correspondence, and general commercial routine, besides a fair acquaintance with the history and growth of commerce, banking and finance.

Nevertheless, with a blindness that fills the foreigner with amazement, our teachers and pedagogues, whose ideas are frequently confined to the narrow circle of the class-room or the University common-room, insist on placing the cart carefully before the horse, and, mistaking the necessary for the subsidiary, bend all their exertions to load our upper-class youth with the



ornamental features of education while they utterly neglect and despise the essential.

Here I am reminded once more of our friend quoted in the earlier pages of this book, who rushing into the pages of the *Daily Mail* to tell us—what everybody knows already—as to our conspicuous culinary inferiority to other nations, proceeds by way of defence to declare, "It is very bad, I admit, but it is English, and as such I am perfectly satisfied!" I greatly fear that all too many upper-class parents support the schoolmasters on these grounds: first, that what was good enough for them is good enough for their children; and, secondly, that it stands to reason there is not much to complain of in a system which has produced a Pitt, a Wellington, a Peel, and a Gladstone! I have heard these two sentences from childhood upwards in more or less identical form used by perfectly sane persons on numberless occasions; and as it is perfectly useless to argue with persons of that mental calibre, we can only hope that the frequent jeremiads in the daily papers may have some effect in eliciting from their fears, if not their convictions, some gleam of reason, which may tend eventually to operate a useful reform.

Let us consider for a moment what is Business as applied to the ordinary transactions. In its plainest and practical everyday sense it is the art of so ordering and defining your share in any contract, work, purchase, sale or other transaction, as to insure the complete carrying out of your side of the transaction without incurring any unforeseen risks; while the other party, whom you must invariably regard as your adversary, shall be placed in such a position by your precautions and forethought and the accuracy of your language, that he can take no advantage to your detriment. Ingenuous youth is all too apt to forget that business is generally transacted with men who approach business from the point of view of making themselves safe, while they provide abundant loopholes for either overcharging or providing an inferior quality of material, or by any and every trick or deception transferring as far as in them lies the largest amount of cash from their adversary's pockets into their own, and for enabling them, in the second place, to "scamp" their work or deceive their employer (or adversary) as much as possible, in the carrying out of the same. If, therefore, he has not been

brought up among the sordid money-grubbing classes—who from their earliest youth have laboriously striven to get the better of their fellow-men by every conceivable trick that their large acquaintance with the practice of the Police Courts or their inherited instincts teaches them to be safe and practicable—the honourable and well-intentioned youth who glows with a manly desire to take part in the active strife of English political or commercial life, will, setting aside all suspicion of deception, infallibly incline to accept the statements made to him, and imagine that his adversary will be possessed of the same honest desire as himself to carry out his work in a creditable manner. He will fondly believe that great firms whose names perchance are known throughout the land, who “are employed by the Government” and are “patronised by the King,” etc., etc., will have some regard for their reputation, and out of his inexperience he will imagine that these things will be a guarantee for honourable conduct and a pledge of good faith and efficiency. He will be astonished to find that so far from striving to act up to their advertised reputation, the firms with which he deals rely on their magnitude and importance for the support of the Press, and, if occasion requires, upon its influence with the Courts in stress or difficulty, and that they are solely guided by the principles of selfish interest and immediate gain, without being deterred by any consideration of risk to that “good name” which, by the usual means of self-advertisement and Press bribery, is practically placed beyond the reach of private assault. Nor can it be too often repeated that the indignation or sympathy of the English Public cannot be counted upon in the slightest degree as a check upon private dishonesty: for, be it remembered, Public Opinion, properly speaking, does not exist in this Press-ridden country. English men and women derive all their ideas and opinions from their pet newspaper, except that which filters through the current gossip of the parlour and the tap-room, the drawing-room and the club. Thus the greatest safeguard against outrage, whether to good taste or to good morals, is entirely absent in England and the United States, since the Press in those countries is in the pay of the offender if powerful or rich enough to secure its defence.

Besides, current sympathy, that is, the real or intimate

opinion of English men and women, whether it is expressed in the language of Belgravia or the jargon of the East End, is generally on the side of the rogue. For, whatever Englishmen may profess when they are writing or speaking on morals, if we do but take them off their high horse, in other words, catch them in a state of Nature, are they not always ranged on the side of "smartness," that is of roguery? And here we come to the inner kernel of "business" by easy stages. Your true English man and woman at heart love a rogue, though they would perish sooner than explicitly avow it. Listen to the language of the Press! What can be nobler and higher than its strains when it describes the iniquity of Russia in coveting Manchuria, or laments the anti-Semiticism of France and bewails in heartrending tones the injustice meted out to Captain Dreyfus! It would bring tears from a stone to hear it discourse in general terms of that magnificent abstract respect for virtue which is supposed ever to animate the Briton. But let us descend from the general to the particular. Observe the British reporter describing the latest City swindle in the halfpenny papers, or the most recent roguery on the Stock Exchange! How lovingly he will dilate upon every feature of the rascal's face in order that the duchesses and housemaids who were unable to gloat upon his features and admire his easy impudence, may at all events be acquainted with the colour of his eyes, the set of his trousers, and the most minute particulars of his deportment in the dock! Neither the reporter (who is now, mark you! off his high horse, and comports himself like any simple Briton) nor the noble Earl, who is, as the papers will tell you, offered a seat by the magistrate; nor 'Arry, who nudges his "pal" in the back rows and enjoys the gratuitous spectacle better than any pantomime, has the slightest sympathy with the *victim* of the unblushing rogue who sits before them twiddling his moustache, knowing full well he is the cynosure of every eye, the darling of the ladies and the subject of universal envy and admiration! What reck they of the misery he has wrought through his villainies! Who of those who read the daily papers that describe the squalid story of his career, waste a thought, or care a fig for the hecatomb of human sorrows involved? The tragedy is regarded as simply in the light of an amusing social pastime—

nothing more. The newspapers teem with loathsome details of crime which have been painfully raked out of the social sewer for the express amusement of the idle of both sexes—as if Providence had ordained it from all time that it might be dished up to an Englishman's breakfast to tickle his ears with a new sensation. The public sympathy assuredly goes out to the man who carries off his crimes with a high hand ; and having won his way to public notice by free-and-easy impudence, he will retain it undimmed to the end, though convicted of a thousand villainies. Alas ! why is this ? Simply because from the drawing-room to the gutter, and the gutter to the drawing-room, opinion is much the same at bottom. All alike adore a "sensation." All alike adore a clever rogue.

We are often told that what with our frivolous Press and hurried life, we have no time to think or talk. Fifty years since it was found out that we had lost the art of talking—if ever we had it. Now we have lost the art of thinking—if ever we had that. We have neither the time nor the inclination for anything but sensual enjoyment. Steam and telegraphy, telephones and special editions have put an end to all that : we buy our thinking ready-made nowadays in the evening papers—and such thinking ! But after all what can you expect for a penny !

One of the wisest men of old Greece said these noble words, "The fool thinks he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

But what is a fool in England ? From the drawing-room to the gutter the definition is the same, if couched in different language. The fool is the man who cannot keep his own money or get anybody else's. In other lands, the fool is the man who knows not, that is, who lacks wisdom ; but in England and America, it is he who lacks money. For the Anglo-Saxon races, the world is divided into two principal sections—rogues and fools. This is what our Press and our Law has done for us. We do not publicly set up roguery as a fitting subject for admiration, but we admire men for their roguery and cunning, which surely comes to the same thing in the end. 'Arry at the East End calls him the "right 'un." The Duke at the other end calls him a "far-seeing man" or "one of the right sort." The difference is almost imperceptible. Let him but make a mistake,

however, and the scene is changed. He then becomes a “wrong ‘un”—delightful euphemism! Can any word speak fuller volumes to the human mind than this? The successful rogue who “gets on” better than his neighbours in any field of life as the Englishman understands it, that is, by methods of business which transfers his neighbour’s cash into his own purse by whatever means—so long as the law is kept at bay—he is one of the “right sort!” He enjoys the undisguised envy of his fellows! Men will nod approvingly at his name in the enclosure at Ascot and the Turf Club or Ranelagh—for we are not enthusiastic as a rule, or eloquent in praise or dispraise—and say “he’s no fool,” or “he’s got his head screwed on the right way,” and so forth. Is this not truly Anglo-Saxon? Yet who will dare to deny the truth of it? We have just enough foreign veneer, imported by the Normans, no doubt, when we compose our orations for public consumption, or write our leaders for the daily papers, to assume a grace we do not possess. But will any of us search into his own heart, or look out honestly abroad upon this land of ours, and say we are not for the most part Anglo-Saxon to the core? Our very language betrays the secret! “King,” “konig,” or “koning” is not that Anglo-Saxon for “cunning”?—precisely the same word as “knowing”? In other words, no doubt, we elected our king in Saxon days as the most cunning or “knowing” amongst us, our admiration being centred, as it is now, on the man with the most cunning, in a word, one who knew better than any one else how to “do” his fellows!

#### HYPOCRISY OUR MOST CONSPICUOUS VIRTUE.

We may vow as much as we please that we love Art, Literature, Poetry, that we admire the graceful, the beautiful, the noble in nature or man, but do we believe each other? Certainly not! We may pretend to do so, perhaps, for we are told it is the right thing to do; but when we put off our hypocrisy, in short, doff our armour and sit at our ease, gentle reader, you know as well as I do that we will have none of it. The Kings, the “Konings,” the “cunnings”; they are the men we really admire. The fools are those we despise, to wit, those who do not understand “business”; those, in short, who are the natural prey of “business men.” Here you have English life

in a nut-shell. To be or not to be, Rogue or Fool? that is the question.

Let me, in all soberness and sincerity, address my words to the ingenuous youth of Britain. Would you earn fame, wealth and distinction, or shall you content yourself with the applause of your own conscience and the conviction of your own superiority to your fellows? If you would be respected, honoured, admired, strive to belong to the former category, and above all learn enough Law to avoid its meshes. A very little will suffice. Enrol yourself in the "*most honourable*" body of Benchers! which can be easily done by "eating a term" or two: the dinners may be indigestible and the port new: but though you may injure your stomach you will steel your heart against all good by hearing more cynicism and more perverted axioms, acquire more cunning, more "brass," and more contempt for abstract justice, in short, fit yourself more completely for success in English life than by any other known means. Next, if you can scrape together sufficient money or credit, set up a stud of race-horses, buy a lodge at Newmarket, and your education is complete. You may then go into any business you like, or plunge into the City with a certainty of success. They cannot harm you even there. For you shall be a "Koning" or a "king" in England, and you shall rise higher and higher. You will in time learn to invoke the Law to defend your frauds and to confound your victims till you come to treat her terrors with scorn. But beware of the slightest carelessness, for a single mistake may ruin you, for all your law. Though you be Director of this or that Company, or Promoter of this or that swindling Association, boon companion of the King, or even a "Celebrity at home"; not all this shall save you, if you are caught tripping at last! For though the great ladies will gaze at you in the dock, and crowd and crush into Court to see you cross-examined, and keenly watch you to see if your moustache is as well curled or your head as well brushed as of yore, though you have ever so much the sympathy of the penny papers and the thoughtless triflers of the clubs, and though halfpenny Specials interview you and belaud you ever so fondly, it shall not avail to save you; for from a "Koning" you shall have been hurled headlong into the Limbo of Fools: and from this there is no Redemption.

Here is your true worldly wisdom, unadorned—naked but unashamed. How like you the picture, Mothers of England? Do I exaggerate, and if so, where? I never see a merry, bright-faced boy running out to cricket or football with his curly hair and blue-grey eyes, clear and limpid as an English summer sky, without lamenting the fate that awaits him. Look into his face, it would seem as if such a boy could not deceive or tell a lie to save his life: and yet, what is the social lesson which he learns during the long years at Eton, Harrow, or Rugby, but to mistrust his fellows, to disbelieve all he hears, to learn all evil, and doubt all good? With all this, he must never be caught telling a lie, though Heaven itself should fall. Thus the lesson of his young life is *never to trust* his nearest and dearest, and yet *never to tell a lie*! Must not, then, his whole life be a lie? Does he not slowly but surely learn that all the business of life is deception? and yet he is told that the greatest disgrace that can befall him is to be detected in a lie. What is this but to saturate a boy at his most impressionable age with that insincerity, that artificiality, that want of naturalness and spontaneity which, above all things, divides the Britons from men of other lands? From his first entrance to school, and his first admission to the companionship of other boys, his earliest lesson is to disbelieve his school-fellows' statements and the egregious lies with which he is crammed. The whole delight and highest aim of the British schoolboy is to surprise and perplex the last new-comer by his exceptional powers of lying, while the new-comer in his turn, having been deprived of every vestige of modesty and truth, looks forward to the time when he can distinguish himself by "selling" those who come after him. Can any one deny this? Is not this the very basis of that English democratic education which is so often held out to be the crowning glory of a public school? And must it not react upon the entire democracy in coming years, or must we suppose that the vice is inherent in the Saxon, and regard it as ineradicable?

Yet, like the Persian of old, whose three chief lessons were "to shoot straight, ride well, and tell the truth," the English boy is ever told that no English gentleman should tell a lie. What a hollow mockery! No verbal inaccuracy at any price, but insincerity and untruth everywhere! Is it not, then, almost

certain that this early lesson will bear fruit, and that a boy's chief aim will not be so much to avoid lying as to avoid detection? Or if truthful by nature, and loathing deception in itself, can he fail to be infected as time goes on, when he sees Roguery and Deceit around him everywhere? In business, or pleasure, in the smoking-room, the club, the billiard-room, the race-course, the Stock Exchange, in shop or workroom, in the crowded marts of the City—Lying and Deception everywhere! He goes to College. Here he is met with a new apprenticeship of Lying and Deception. New "crams," new "sells," new tests to see if aught remains of juvenile greenness, or aught of simplicity and purity to rub away. He takes up the newspaper, what learns he there? The same lesson. He looks at the advertisement sheets. Lying and Deception from end to end—tales of hair lotions which will bring out hair on the baldest of heads, of pills which cure every known disease, etc., etc. But why repeat the same disgusting tale which all know that have reached man's and woman's estate? Even the comic papers, one and all of them, English or American, what is their wit but Roguery and Deception, all teaching the same lesson and harping on the same string? Roguery and Deceit, Deceit and Roguery!

Worse still is the lesson of the comic papers, for they at least must surely answer to some chord in the English heart. We shall be told, "Their only aim is to sell well. Their pressing need is to outbid their fellows in a competition that grows keener every day of the year." But tell me not that theirs is not the wit that English men and women love. How else would it suit their owners to keep repeating the same dull theme? Take up a dozen comic papers and analyse their contents. Do they not in nine cases out of ten harp upon Roguery and Deception?

The truth is that the Englishman finds nothing funnier, no subject more worthy of his wit, than the deception of his fellow-men. Go to the theatre, the club, the smoking-room, the race-course, hear the fast man about town or the coatless ostler in the stable yard; or cross the Atlantic Ocean and traverse the Continent from east to west, listen to the talk of the Wall Street speculator or of the cowboys out West, as they circle round their



cattle to “round them up,” or lounge about the stove when their day’s work is done. What is the topic of their conversation, what moves them to greatest joy and delights them above all measure? Why, to be sure—“jossing” a “tender-foot,” or, wildest delight of all—“putting a joss” on each other, if indeed such a thing be possible. What does all this mean, if not that Anglo-Saxons worship Deception and Trickery above all things else. And if I am told, “But surely nowhere in the world is an honest man and a straightforward more highly appreciated than with us,” I confidently reply, “On paper, yes! but in the flesh, never.”

Alas! that it should be so. From “Merry England” to a nation of Shopkeepers—“What a fall is there, my countrymen!” Yet to whom shall we turn for help or example? Not certainly to the helter-skelter, Jew-led mob who dub themselves Society and into whose foul vortex day by day the best names of England are sucked and submerged; not certainly to that tiny handful of the “real old blood” of England who, did they but dare to affront the Press and public opinion and the smiles of Court favour, could stand alone and bid defiance to the ever-growing throng, nay, perhaps roll back the tide by their example; not certainly to the pleasure-loving aristocracy whose wives and daughters dance attendance upon German-Jews and Yankee millionaires, and whose sons seek the heiresses from across the Atlantic while their fathers prostitute their titles to fish guineas out of the troubled waters of the City. In vain we look for the steadfast courage of the “noblesse” of France, who during the long years of Louis Philippe, the Presidency, and the Second Empire, with but a few contemptible exceptions, denied themselves all pleasure and forsook the splendours of the most brilliant Court of Europe rather than take part in a social system which they could not approve.

#### FAVOURITISM

has always been the reproach of Oriental nations; Nepotism has always been the standard charge brought against the Popes and the Papal system. One would suppose from the scorn we continually level at the manners of the East, and not less eloquently pour upon the rulers of modern Rome, that these almost

synonymous ills were unknown to our more robust people. This is apparently another of the many instances of our incredible blindness to our own defects—shall we say it is one of the colossal “Cats in the bag” of which we are so tenderly careful, and above all so discreet, in the presence of the foreigner ?

Day by day our eyes are affronted with the strange vagaries of Law and Justice at home, yet with what eloquence and scorn we turn up our righteous eyes, and weep over the sorrows of the Dreyfus trial, or denounce the painful irregularities of Monte Carlo—which, by the way, we of all nations are the most active in supporting—the horrors of the bull-ring, the sad superstitions of Southern Europe, and the squalor and misery of Ireland, which for more than a century we took infinite pains to promote. It is a queer thing, nevertheless, that our intimate history, memoirs, letters of public men, etc., for the last three centuries are loaded to the brim with complaints of Favouritism. Scarcely any feature is more conspicuous in early or modern English literature than this—Army, Navy, Civil Service, Politics, Court, ever the same story ! The impartial reader would imagine that it was an especially English characteristic, so common is the complaint and so far-reaching its extent, unless indeed we are to accept it as a universal human failing from which no nations are wholly free. But if this is the case, the less reason surely to boast of our exemption, unless, as I have hinted before, we are apt to brag of the virtue that we least possess, following out that primitive natural law which urges men and women to “lay especial stress and store” by those virtues which they fail to possess. Nor does it seem that we have made any progress since the days of Queen Anne, for the current literature with which we were deluged after the deplorable Crimean muddle of the middle of the century, or the Boer muddle at the end, whose expensive and disastrous results we are still suffering from, teems with glaring instances upon every page. For all that, our attempts to reform usually take the shape of a momentary outburst of indignation, during which the Government lies low, waiting till the clouds roll by.

We are continually complaining that there is not enough

taste in England to beautify a public square or lay out a public garden. But why? Nobody will deny that English country-houses are and have been, inside and out, crammed with beautiful objects these three hundred years and more, though whether by foreign or native art it would be well not to inquire too closely. Why is it, then, that if ever we succeed in designing a fine building we invariably place it where it should not have been placed, or where it cannot adequately be admired? If we succeed in carving a good monument or a handsome memorial, are we not sure to put it where it will obstruct a public thoroughfare and become a nuisance instead of an ornament? When we take an occasional fancy to lavish extravagance, do we not pile our ornaments all together as in Trafalgar Square, so that each one clashes with its neighbour and presents an unpleasing and confused whole? When by an unhappy suggestion it is thought necessary to ornament Piccadilly Circus, the highest expression of national art takes the form of an insignificant sprite on the top of a tub! And why is this? Simply because there is a most plentiful lack of Honesty combined with a superabundant contempt for Justice, which lies at the root of Favouritism. But do these ill-doers not fear reprisals? “Certainly not,” why should they? For in England and America every man “grinds his own axe” and thinks it his first duty to help his friends to “roll their log,” and as for Public Taste, Criticism, or fear of public reproach, like Gallio he “cares nothing for such things.” John Bull, as I have often remarked, is of a patient and bovine disposition. “Live and let live” is his motto, and, however glaring the scandal, Indignation is not popular among a nation of Shopkeepers. The upper classes call it “Bad form,” the middle classes say it “doesn’t pay,” and the lower classes “do not care a d—— for the whole blooming concern!” I have already enlarged sufficiently upon this head in commenting upon the disgraceful decay of Oxford and Cambridge and the wholesale speculation and mismanagement of its funds, now happily reduced to comparative harmlessness by State interference. Nor need I further allude to the wholesale Favouritism of Church appointments with its notorious abuses still rife and rampant wherever yet unpruned by strong external pressure.

While I write, the halfpenny papers are howling at the

iniquitous mismanagement of the Chantrey Funds and slinging in vain their cheap and harmless satire at the complacent rulers of the Royal Academical Olympus.

The War Office is at the present moment issuing a special "Order in Council" which is aimed directly at the prevailing system of army Favouritism. But until a social ban is placed against such practices, so long will it be vain to stop them. For here even more than elsewhere the Law will never succeed in outstriding the average morality of the nation. The Royal Commission exposed roguery and thieving during the Boer War in every department of public expenditure—and each successive act of plunder was detailed by the chairman, proved, and commented upon in turn—with pretended horror, not unmingled with private admiration.

Will the chief engineers of the aforesaid Treasury robberies be treated like felons—or even prosecuted and imprisoned? Certainly not, the whole thing is a solemn British farce—like the Public Enquiry into the Jameson Raid. The Commissioners thoroughly enjoy it, the chairman enjoys it, and the public enjoy it, and the offenders become enrolled as popular characters along with Fred Archer, Mr. Chamberlain and Dan Leno.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### WIT AND HUMOUR

THIRTY years ago it was a customary gibe on the Continent that Englishmen and Americans were so devoid of humour that their newspapers supplied it along with the morning milk. We suffer (they say) so much from the spleen, which, as far as I know, is a kind of French invention to explain the causes of our saturnine and unsocial temperament, that they suppose such antidotes to be absolutely necessary for the digestion of our morning meal.

In those days, if I rightly recollect, the *Charivari* was the only comic paper of any note, and, like *Punch*, appearing weekly, was devoted almost entirely to a political agency whose chief aim was to render the French Government ridiculous in the eyes of the public. It tickled Frenchmen immensely to think that the American papers devoted every day a column to more or less stale jokes, hunted up from Heaven knows where, and laboriously quoted by what they called "Our Comic Correspondent."

With the exception of "Cham," who made his name during the Crimean War, we English may be said to have invented Caricature; since nothing like Dicky Doyle's work for combined skill, humour and draftsmanship has ever been produced on the other side of the Channel.

Still the ever-growing flood of comic papers in our midst is undeniably a sign of the times; nor can it be doubted that the foreigners' surmise is in the main correct, that there is a very real demand for manufactured jokes on the part of the general public: while it seems equally clear, from the number yearly imported from the States, that the British output of humour is insufficient for current needs.

I have always considered it a singular proof of deficiency of wit in the upper classes that they should maintain such an expensive paper as *Punch*, which in spite of the competition of scores of penny and even half-penny papers, at least its equal in wit and drawing, if not in the quality of print and paper — still maintains its high price and popularity despite the fact that whatever wit or reputation it ever once possessed seems long since to have departed. Surely the well-

known Conservatism or fidelity of the British people is never more beautifully illustrated than by its willingness to support *Punch* at three times the price of its upstart contemporaries. I have still at this date a distinct recollection of wondering how long its subscribers would endure the continuance of a page or so of weekly drivel entitled "Happy Thoughts," which were persistently published week after week as if for the express purpose of testing the patience of a long-suffering public.

In the light of what passes for wit in *Punch*, I have often asked myself, "Do we really know wit when we see it?" Evidently we want wit badly, or we should not pay so highly for it. We seem to imagine we know wit when we see it, or we should not gibe at the Scotchman, and say that it requires a surgical operation to get a joke into his head, which to my mind is a very unfair libel upon our brethren from the Land o' Cakes; for, as far as my experience goes, the average Scotchman, especially of the lower middle class, has as ready a wit and as keen an appreciation of a joke as any man living. Indeed, I have a shrewd suspicion that the Irish and Scotch do not waste their money in buying wit to anything like the extent that we do, and this I take to be a very strong argument in favour of their humoristic capabilities.

That an enormous and ever-growing capital must be wasted yearly in the purchase of bad jokes is evident to anyone who stands by a railway bookstall. And the cry is "Still they come." Day by day fresh comic papers, or fresh comic ventures under new names, meet the eye. Clearly, an ever-present temptation is thus afforded for the encouragement of the idlest conceivable use to which human brains can be put. Nor can we hesitate to believe that buyers abound, or the wares would certainly tend to diminish in numbers and volume.

Let us consider for an instant their quality and character. Probably sixty per cent. of their contents turn upon successful roguery in buying and selling, and the rest in vulgar buffoonery, eked out with the latest Yankee slang. Now since it may be fairly supposed that such stuff as this is more likely to be devoured by young stomachs than old, what must be the effect on the youthful digestion of literature of this kind, in which a carefully distorted view of the probable, the desirable, and the moral

side, is presented to the budding mind, and the earliest pictures of life shown to him in a topsy-turvy condition accompanied by that prestige and authority which printed matter necessarily possesses for immature youth? To be sure, our comic papers may be credited, both in England and America, with one quality which must be denied to their Continental rivals. However unrefined and vulgar our comic papers may be, neither their pictures nor their letterpress contain the indecent and disgusting illustrations which seem to delight our Continental neighbours, and in a striking degree disfigure their streets and thoroughfares. We are, however, straining every nerve to reach the level of our Continental rivals in this as in all other branches of lucrative commerce. Nothing but Police Regulations bar the triumphant progress of our enterprising traders in that direction. It will be noticed that P—rs' Soap Co. at the present moment cover London with as meretricious and lascivious a picture as can be found on any Parisian or Belgian hoarding, and the Stage is only deterred by the reputed severity of our Police laws\* from still further spreading their corrupt influence among the youth of Great Britain.

It is often a matter of discussion, in view of the marked difference between Gallic salt and English humour, and their mutual incomprehensibility, which of the two nations possesses the highest title to a keen and genuine appreciation of Wit. Two things have struck me as militating strongly against our pretensions to discernment in such matters. Setting aside the venal or "made-to-order" wit of the comic papers, and confining ourselves to well-known traditional examples, not excluding in our purview the ordinary British stock joke, handed down through generations as the "Capital story" of So-and-so, commonly styled the "Joe Miller" (in consequence of a large collection of such having been published under that name), and with all due consideration for the public taste as exhibited by comic characters upon the Stage or the preference shown for certain characters in well-known novels—it seems as if British taste in Wit rarely rises above vulgar buffoonery.

\*I apologise to the Police. As this goes to press (June, 1907), I am credibly informed that the Police is powerless to prevent men and women from being exposed, naked, to the public gaze under the name of "living statues"—so long as their bodies are whitened or gilt! (How truly British!)

There seems to be no really popular demand for anything beyond coarse fun ; and it does not seem probable, judging by the reputation which our leading humorists have left behind them, that refinement or delicacy of wit has ever been an English characteristic, or, if produced, that the public would have appreciated them, or cared to hand them down to posterity.

Some years ago, at a General Election, a youthful nobleman made a considerable reputation as a wit upon the hustings, and indeed, I have understood, in the more elevated sphere of the British House of Commons, by answering a rude elector who jeeringly asked him, "Does your mother know you're out?" "Yes, and what is more, she will soon learn that I am in."

It would be idle to quote the multifarious traditional imbecilities that set the Theatre in a roar, and in all probability have done duty since Shakespeare's days, or to remind my readers how the popular comedian, who is invariably greeted with laughter as soon as he shows his face, convulses (or, in my view, insults) the audience by defacing his author's dialogue with idiotic "gags" of his own manufacture, usually quite devoid of anything approaching wit, and which usually consist in interpolating irrelevantly the cant phrase of the day, or the latest product of Music-hall tomfoolery. Let us turn to a "serious critic" in the person of the late Edmund Yates, "the distinguished novelist," who in his "Recollections and Experiences," in the course of a description of the various managers and contributors to *Punch*, writes, that he considered Shirley Brooks to have been the only entirely successful editor and manager of that popular periodical, and, indeed, the only man among all those connected with it, of whose "wit" he speaks in terms of unqualified praise. I subjoin his actual words:—

"Shirley Brooks' verses were better than nine-tenths of the poems of his day. His style, both in verse and prose-writing, was excessively neat, but his neatness never swamped his humour. He was charmingly witty, but at the same time broadly funny, e.g.:

" 'What are the wild waves saying?'

Said a maid in a round straw hat,

On the sands of Margate playing—

'Papa, can you tell me that?'



Her sire in grim displeasure,  
No kind of an answer made,  
*Till she fetched him a slight refresher*  
With the flat of her wooden spade." (*sic verbatim.*)

These few words seem to me to speak volumes to the thinking mind. They are worth a world of controversy. Here we have the Pride of English Journalism and Letters, who was not only able to publish two volumes of drivel in reviewing the scribblers of his day with sufficient success to find their way into the Tauchnitz Edition, and, therefore, presumably with the approval and applause of his fellow-countrymen, but who takes occasion therein to give the palm for wit and elegant versification to Shirley Brooks, and to justify his preference by a sample, of which it is perhaps enough to say that it would not disgrace a small boy in the Fourth Standard.

Though I have earlier adverted to *Punch*, I cannot but quote it again as an instance of that peculiar reverence for an old-time reputation which causes a people who rarely think for themselves, and hate to go against the tide of common talk by which alone Good-taste is set up and maintained, to cling fast to old landmarks: thus rendering Merit, Skill, and Good Management entirely superfluous. Now, since the Press tells them that *Punch*, as the dearest, and "Our only Original Comic Paper," is at the head of the comic literature of the world, Englishmen and women naturally accept the statement as an axiom, and duly pay their 3*d.* for it as if it were an institution of the country which every patriot ought to maintain. While admitting that its frontispiece is a most elegant performance, that Dicky Doyle and John Leech as draftsmen have cast an undying halo around its past, and that John Tenniel's cartoons, even as late as the 70's, went far to galvanise it into life and rescue it from absolute contempt, I can hardly think so ill of my fellow-countrymen as to believe that they would support a newspaper, whose only pretensions to wit and merit is its price and antiquity, were they not thoroughly convinced that its wit and merit were indisputable. Furthermore, as a natural consequence, *Punch* is taken by foreigners to represent the highest standard of British wit, and as such subjects us to much unmerited sarcasm and contempt.

As to our real inner private taste (by far the safest guide—

since it is controlled by the Press to a less appreciable extent) the demeanour of the British Public at plays, concerts, and other entertainments generally, may well be taken as the best Criterion of Judgment. In most countries the humour that tickles the stalls is quite distinct from that which appeals to the gallery. I have always remarked, however, that in England, the stalls and the gallery, however different their manner of manifesting their delight, are at one in their solid enjoyment of what is styled "broad farce," which may be more correctly termed vulgar buffoonery. Now broad farce forms a definite class of comic action invented at least as early as the twelfth century by the Southern Italians. It may be described as foolery in action, which was slowly filtered into our country under the familiar disguise of our street Punch three centuries ago: and, something like a century later, in its silent form, produced our modern pantomime. It is eminently suited for children or people in a very low stage of intellect and imagination. Delicate satire and that partial concealment or veiled suggestion of absurdity which is the essence of good wit, are entirely wasted upon the uncultivated intellect, which, possessing little imagination, is unable to grasp the subtlety lurking within. Many Englishmen admit that the Scotch and the Irish take the palm in sly humour. Most of us have not enough perception of the nature of wit to comprehend that suppression or reticence is the kernel and Ultima Thule of true wit. Like the violet it hides itself shyly beneath its leaf, and is invisible to all but the practised eye or ear of the faithful.

I have said elsewhere that nothing betrays a nation's bent so much as its likes and dislikes exemplified by the meat it feeds on. Newspapers, comic writers, plays, music-halls, fairs, public entertainments, alike cater to what they suppose to be the public taste. It is significant to note that while Italy reserves her buffoonery for the open-air performances which still delight the children of the lower classes in every town, her "pantaloons" and her "scaramouches," filtering through the French "pierrots," still delight the higher-class audiences of our watering-places with their comic songs and antics; while, more significantly still, in her pantomime which found its warmest home in England towards the middle of the last century, the graceful

figures of Columbine and Harlequin, which constituted its chief and distinctive charm, were soon weeded out in favour of the more attractive vulgarities of Pantaloon and Clown. It cannot but be interesting to students of National æsthetic to note the gradual elimination of the elegant and graceful, until only the brutal and unrefined remain. The unerring instinct of managerial observation soon found out that the performances of Clown, personifying greed and roguery, whose audacious conspiracies against Law and Order are usually nullified by the stupidity and clumsiness of Pantaloon, were far more to the taste of British boys and girls than the subtle beauties of the invisible Harlequin, who typifies with the sprightly Columbine that ideal of Love and Mystery which, through the fairy's power of concealment and transformation, is given to Spirit over Matter.

Once more, what is it that really and truly unlocks British hearts and wreathes their faces in an universal smile? Sitting in a box, I have often looked upon the impassive faces of the decorous and well-dressed stallholders and wondered if anything could make those dull faces relax. Suddenly the "low comic" reels upon the stage, disguised in liquor, and all is changed as if by enchantment. A broad grin of unconcealed delight passes from mouth to mouth, turning darkness into day. And no sooner does the vulgar wretch plunge heavily at the hostess' hand and "land" head foremost in her husband's white waistcoat—eliciting an involuntary "Damn"—than the mirth of the stalls, now carried to its highest point, is drowned in the joyous shouts that resound from the gallery and pit, and, in the words of the reporter, "The entrance of Mr. Snooks, the eminent comedian, was signaled by his usual drollery, and was rewarded with universal applause."

At one time, early in the 90's, being afflicted with insomnia, for which I had tried every known remedy, I entered a music-hall for the first time, at the advice of a facetious friend, who told me that if that did not make me sleep, nothing would. I found his recipe excellent. What with the noise, jingle, clatter, and the amazing imbecility and monotony of the spectacle, and an atmosphere compounded of the fumes of tobacco, beer, brandy and whisky, I went home in a condition of mental and bodily stupefaction which plunged me at once

into the deepest slumber. While taking this unpleasant cure with the utmost regularity and conscientiousness for several weeks, I was surprised to observe that while applause of the most violent and noisy description, possibly bought and paid for was impartially distributed to all the performers in succession without distinction, one individual, whom I discovered on inquiry to be afflicted with the singular name of Dan Leno, at once attracted my attention as possessing an originality and humour which placed him in a totally different category from the vulgar Music-hall herd; while, to my still greater astonishment, I found that this Phoenix of the Halls was in no degree distinguished from his fellows by the special approbation and favour of the spectators! How or when Dan Leno attained his later fame, I cannot say; but for many years after I first heard him, although he was then certainly at his best and freshest, he was undoubtedly entirely unknown to public fame or newspaper comment. For such is the total inability of the average Briton to distinguish good from bad in anything under the sun until the newspapers point the way, that, as it was with most other histrionic notabilities, Irving included, Originality or Merit remains entirely undiscovered and unappreciated until the Press suddenly praises them to the skies (no doubt for cash down), when they at once start off at a gallop upon the road to Fame and Fortune, until guineas like daisies strew their path, and what little Merit and Originality they ever possessed is entirely out-grown. But what matter? English men and women do not delight in good work, but a good name. The difference between a street ballad-singer and a Patti or a Grisi is to most of them just the difference 'twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee. If they fight and crush and jostle to see Paderewski play the Carnival of Venice on one string, or to be the first to flatten their noses as far as the rope will allow them against the marvellous "symphony in yellow" of Tompkins, R.A., about which all London raves—it does not follow that they love fiddling or dote on pictorial art—but that in the first place they love fighting and crushing and jostling for itself, and secondly they want to say they have seen Paderewski or Tompkins' picture, and cannot rest, until they do.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### KING AND SOCIETY

SOME may be inclined to doubt my assertions that the English are changing their nature and fast becoming a pleasure-loving, luxury-seeking, light-hearted, cigarette-smoking, and tea-drinking population, instead of the staid, sober, phlegmatic, pipe-smoking, and beer-drinking Englishman of Continental fame, who, while admittedly "calm and correct," was said to take his pleasures sadly; yet none will deny the transformation in the public attitude towards the Prince of Wales after his narrow escape from death by typhoid fever, when the popular outburst of a hitherto unsuspected personal loyalty served to dispel any doubts about British monarchical tendencies and contributed to seat the Guelphs upon their legs in a manner that their most sanguine supporters had scarcely hoped for.

In the 60's, which is the furthest point to which my boyish recollections extend, my impression is very distinct that, though a certain measure of personal devotion to the Queen, at first evoked by her innocence and youth, and afterwards strengthened by her simple if determined resistance to current evils, Court abuses and political quackery, had tended to fan the-expiring embers of Guelph popularity, the unfortunate ultra-Germanism of the Prince Consort and his stiffness to conform to the views and ways of the English Court struggled hard with the increasing veneration for her spotless domestic life and the sterling qualities which endeared her to her subjects, and considerably abated the early fervour which had greeted the first years of her reign.

The Land-owners, who formed the backbone of the loyalty of the country, regarding it as a creed which they had learned and sedulously fostered rather than a matter of principle or discretion, were dissatisfied with the repeal of the Corn-tax, which they firmly believed would bring about their ruin. The Middle class discovered, to their deep disappointment and disgust,

that the enlarged Franchise produced more apparent than real change in the balance of power, and were impatiently fretting for the political whirligig to give them that influence which they had so fondly hoped for; and the lower classes had not yet derived the advantage in food and wages which the new Fiscal system was destined later to produce. There was restlessness in the air, and doubt in men's minds.

With the Queen's premature bereavement she had retired completely from public life, sinking entirely her interest in the country in the sorrows of widowhood. Her withdrawal from her position as mainspring of the social machine was the signal for an outburst of reaction against all that had been driven out and trampled beneath the resolute foot of the imperious little Queen. The pleasure-loving Prince of Wales and his brothers contributed not a little to set "the ball a-rolling," and in a society where each class follows the one above it and a prying and inquisitive Press "communicates" every tittle of information that money or cunning can elicit to tickle the public ear, it is scarcely wonderful if the highly-flavoured tales and scandalous anecdotes which filtered through Court gossip, losing nothing in force and intensity on their passage to public print, shattered the illusions still cherished by a Puritanical middle class, that with the age of Victoria the evil odour that had clung about rank and riches since the days of good old George the Third had disappeared for ever. While it could hardly be strictly said that there was a definite Republican Party in the country, it was clear from the speeches of many of the Radicals, along with not a few Irishmen of wit and learning, that it would not take much to set alight a train in that direction; and had it not been for the mysterious accident of the Prince's illness while yet our neighbours were struggling to be free from the Pinchbeck Empire across the Channel which enchained so many by its brilliancy and splendour, it is hard to say whether we should not have been infected with the same feeling that inspired France in 1870 to adopt a Republican form of Government.

Myself, coming fresh upon town in the later 60's, brimful of the high-flown monarchical notions with which the youth of the land-owning classes are usually saturated from birth as a

kind of second religion, yet strongly moved by the force of reason and logic and a generous belief in the superiority of my own countrymen to dream of the re-birth in my own country of the glorious Republics of Greece and Rome, I confess that my attitude, in common with many others to whom pleasure or business left time for serious thought, was one of complete indifference to the alleged advantages of Guelph kingship; and though I yield to none in my admiration for the domestic virtues of Queen Victoria, I doubt if I was ever enough of a thorough-going Briton to regard that as an argument for believing her to be the best possible Queen, or her family the best possible selection that the nation could make. Thoroughly persuaded as I was, and am still, that personal loyalty to a ruler is the surest guarantee of order and good government if it really exists in the heart of the people, I had never seen or heard of any authentic proof that such a sentiment did really exist until I witnessed the amazing display of popular enthusiasm elicited by the Prince of Wales's recovery from typhoid fever, which proved a revelation alike to his political enemies and his own most fervent admirers. From that time forth, however strong my theoretical belief in favour of Republican government, after a close inspection of all the Republics of the world, I have come to the conclusion that only a predominance of citizens imbued with firmness, virtue, and an intense love of their country can ever be expected to make headway against the enormous facilities for plunder to the few, and the dangerous attractions always proffered by irresponsible demagogues to the many—while the proofs I had obtained of the latent forces of popular loyalty in this country led me to the conclusion that however repulsive the notion of being governed by a German Dynasty, loyalty to any dynasty soever was far better than none at all, and that the rule of a constitutional king, who is not specially distasteful to the bulk of his subjects, offers the best assurances of peace and good government.

Whatever convictions I had formed in the late 60's upon the growing deterioration of English morals and social usages were more than confirmed after an absence from England of three or four years. A return to bachelor life in Paris after the war with Germany, convinced me that the fall of the Empire,

followed by the lawless reign of the Commune, had acted as an invigorating tonic which had brought the Parisians to their senses and induced more thoughtful, thrifty and less frivolous ways and manners; while, on the other hand, a plunge into the London Season of '72 first satisfied me of what I had long suspected, that the close intimacy subsisting between the two countries which Napoleon the Third had laboured unceasingly to foster during that Reign of Corruption known as the Second Empire, was bearing fruit by a gradual exchange of qualities which, at first chiefly social and external, seemed not unlikely to penetrate the entire mass of our people.

From the time Louis Napoleon had got himself firmly seated on the necks of his compatriots nothing seemed to give him greater pleasure than to vouchsafe a glimpse of his magnificence to his quondam boon-companions across the Channel. The Tuileries were crowded with English visitors, and none there were so bold even among his political enemies as to assert that Louis Napoleon ever forgot a favour or failed to make a handsome return for the hospitality and kindness which had been so lavishly extended to him during his English exile. Luxury was then at its extreme height. The very necessities of the situation demanded a reckless profusion of extravagance in a ruler whose only chance of success was to dazzle the people with the glories and pomp of his Court. On the other hand, the splendid isolation of the old blood of France, whose fathers had shed undying lustre upon the sordid drama of the Revolution by their gallantry and lofty bearing, which not even the scaffold could abate, compelled him to hunt the highways and byways in imitation of his great predecessor Bonaparte to satisfy the Parisian love of pageantry by filling "the Tuileries" and Compiègne with a garish crowd of male and female adventurers of every country, whose habits and antecedents, while they gave abundant material to contemporary chroniclers for the exercise of their satirical wit, created a centre of social disorder whose corruption deeply infected not only the society of Paris, but rapidly extended to the neighbouring kingdoms. Never more attractive by her growing beauty and the fabulous expenditure of countless millions, ravished as only German-Jews know how, from the toiling masses, by the Foulds, Mornays, Lepelletiers,



and Persignys, whose boulevards, kiosks, palaces, and bridges arose as by enchantment under the hands of Hausman—Paris, like the Babylon of old, beckoned all the pleasure-lovers of the world into her lap, while adventurers, male and female, of all countries and qualities, flocked in their wake as vultures gather to the carrion, with not a little hope of winning place and fortune in a Court where the highest prizes were open to the boldest gamiester and the most daring courtesan.

Nor were our own Princes free from the glamour and glitter of the Court of the Imperial Charlatan. Even their royal mother had not been proof against the fascinations of the nineteenth century Babylon, and, unable to withstand the desire to witness that fairy land whose beauties filled the world with dazzling rumour, did not hesitate to place the stamp of her undimmed respectability and virtue upon the Imperial pair who masqueraded so successfully on the throne of Saint Louis. Nor was the lesson thrown away upon the more full-flavoured of our British aristocracy, to whom the dull delights of Windsor or Balmoral alongside of Les Tuileries or Compiègne suggested the comparisons between a funeral and a wedding. Englishmen were well to the fore in the great "rastaquouaire millennium." The Duke of Hamilton, Sir William Wallace, and Lord Henry Seymour, of French Jockey-Club fame, and many others were in the front rank of Parisian favour, and proved to the world how easily Britons could at will shake off their ancient reputation of calm sobriety and assume the cap and bells of Parisian frivolity.

With the death of the Royal Consort and the Queen's retirement from social functions, the Prince of Wales and his even more volatile brother, alike luxurious and pleasure-loving, delighting in the free-and-easy gaieties of the Parisian whirlpool, were not slow to relax at Marlborough and Clarence Houses the rigid German etiquette under which they had so long impatiently fretted, for the airy if undignified freedom of the French capital. Great was the rebound and joyful the reception of the change by all but the refined minority, who comprising as they do the best blood of England and all that is respectable and self-respecting, while they ceased to afford food for newspaper paragraphs, had risen to the envied position of standing aloof from the "Society" of the Press. The greater bulk of the

upper classes, especially the younger members, already deeply infected by the garish joys of Paris, welcomed and treasured up each Court tale or anecdote which proclaimed in high quarters the advent of a second Restoration; while the example of Paris and the success of the "rastaquaire" invasion across the Channel, emboldened German-Jews, American millionaires, shady financiers, and what not, whom the "leaps and bounds" of English prosperity had brought out in swarms like summer flies, to lay siege to the icy barriers of British aristocratic disdain, by methods and arguments which the waning fortunes of our once wealthy peerage rendered them quite unable to resist.

Now, while it is indisputable that the abundant and ever-increasing ragtag and bobtail which, by patient and costly self-advertisement, has earned the title of "Society," had every reason to thank the Heir Apparent for anticipating their hopes and desires by his timely aid, it must not be forgotten that to his charge must also be laid much of that change for the worse which has been wrought in the social system. Just as Charles the Second introduced the worst habits of France, grafted upon the coarse sensuality of Flanders acquired in his early days, so through the tiny rill of blood that flowed from the Stuarts to the Electress Sophia and thus onward to our present King, history repeats itself almost at the same date two centuries later in the introduction of foreign license, to the undisguised delight (it must be avowed) of the pleasure-loving classes of England.

It is often said that "on-lookers see most of the game." This will account for my growing astonishment, as, upon each successive visit to my native shores, I was more and more painfully struck with the evidences of a deterioration in British tone, and a levity and a frivolity unknown to my early youth which seems to penetrate all classes. As in human affairs great changes often follow upon trivial events, I think the change may be set down in part to three leading changes in social usage, amongst which ranks the introduction of cigarettes instead of the familiar cigar or pipe which gradually permeated all classes. The Royal Princes, both ardent smokers, who had long chafed under the restraint which the Queen's strong dislike to tobacco had rigorously imposed within the sacred portals of

Windsor and Buckingham Palace, and possibly encouraged thereunto by foreign practice, succeeded in abolishing the separation of sexes after dinner—which must after all be considered a survival of bibulous barbarism the abolition of which deserves the thanks as well of the ladies as of all lovers of civilisation and progress—but in so doing introduced cigarettes, coffee and liqueurs into the drawing-room. The effect of this was far-reaching in a country where as yet no lady was ever known—or, at all events, seen—to smoke. The natural dislike of the hostess to the pollution of her drawing-room caused the dispersion of the votaries of tobacco to the conservatory or billiard-room, to which they were, naturally, followed by the more enterprising members of the opposite sex.

Thus the harmless but now necessary cigarette, which was first seen upon English soil after the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, was the thin edge of the wedge which finally dethroned the English hostess and disorganised the social system. Just as the transition from the Palladian architecture of Whitehall to the cramped Dutch architecture, and later, the cosy corners and low-ceiled rooms of Queen Anne, too plainly foretold the national fall from claret and rapiers, grand manners and silk hose, to bag-wigs, beer and bowls—so a tobacco-smoking, ease-loving, lounging generation quickly disestablished the elegant if artificial conversation of a polished society, for the sprawling comfort of the club and the free-and-easy ways of the tap-room.

I have already referred to the senseless patronage so warmly accorded to foreign caricaturists, by virtue of that indulgence which English men and women, possibly in imitation of Guelphic Court tradition, delight in extending to undesirable aliens with a recklessness and want of discernment which fills even its recipients with surprise not unmingled with contempt.

The ladies, not to be behind their spouses in the matter of self-advertisement, and bitten even more than their male belongings by every passing novelty, eagerly jumped at this newest trans-Atlantic Press device, by virtue of which the most insignificant faces and personalities may be adroitly beautified for public show and accompanied by a “puff” to correspond, varying in texture and intensity according to the purse or fancy of

the customer. These acts of suicidal folly put the finishing touch to the growing contempt which the light thrown by the gutter Press upon the follies of the "smart" or self-advertising section of Society inspired in the middle and lower classes; and the rank crop of society-scavenging papers which rake up whatever is unsavoury for vulgar perusal, and thus deliberately foster the crimes which they pretend to deplore, cannot but have a disastrous effect in stimulating the curiosity and imitation of the social strata beneath.

In the England of fifty years ago there was yet too much sturdy independence and self-respect for Court manners and fashions to penetrate deeply, or for the still more blatant vulgarities of the "smart sets" to infect other classes but their own. Scarce did the distant echo of their doings reach that refined and cultivated minority which constitute the genuine society of the land, who, for the most part, not unmindful of the cause for which their fathers had bled in centuries past, and yet resigned as a matter of political choice to the German dynasty, pursued their tranquil life, seeking nothing from a Prince's favour, and viewing the ways of Court and the scrambling turmoil which the Press dubs "Society" with equal composure and contempt.

Little by little, with the aid of a fostering Press and a well-advertised backing reeking of gold, from those to whom it was all in all to bask in royal sunshine, a system of well-understood, if tacit barter, grew up, by which the Tomkineses and the Goldsteins manœuvred not in vain for a Prince's smile or the consoling presence of a Serene Highness at their bed or board or "shoot." And with few exceptions, consisting in the main of Scotch and Irish broken-down peers ready to sell their rank to any one or anybody for cash down, Court Society has come to be chiefly recruited from the ranks of the "rastaquaires," while the old blood of the country grows more and more conspicuous by its absence. In any other country than ours the result of social decay among its richer and idler members would not have been so fatal or far-reaching in its effects. The seed thus cast abroad would not have rooted itself in the body politic, nor would its influence have been so widely extended, had not the Press bent all its efforts to flourish it in the public eye

as if the follies and vulgar ostentation of the richer classes were a subject of general edification.

What regeneration, alas ! can be hoped for, or what antidote applied in a country, where it has come to pass—partly through the abolition of all class distinctions, partly through the diffusion of cheap clothing and cheap-and-nasty literature, and partly from a want of backbone in all classes—that the dustman copies and toadies the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper the merchant, the merchant the squire, the squire the peer, the peer the duke, the duke the king, and the king (having no one else to toady) toadies in turn the people to make the circle complete.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE LADIES

VULGARITY is the dominant note of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its infection, like influenza, is impossible to resist. It penetrates everywhere; brazen, self-asserting, self-advertising, self-rejoicing and self-contented. At one time the ladies of England might have done much to resist its onrush, but the time has gone by now. Nor is it doubtful that they themselves have contributed largely to such a result.

In my early days there was a lingering tradition that the high-bred Englishwoman was the most refined hostess in the world. There are no hostesses now. Why should there be? The aspiration of the young man of the period is to be made as comfortable and as much at his ease as possible. His ideal is a snug hotel, and his acme of delight an up-to-date restaurant. What he wants is a manageress, not a hostess. When asked if he enjoyed himself at Springfield Cottage or Dumbleton Tower he will, ten to one, reply either that "Mr. Jones has a rotten cook and poisonous wine," or that "they do you splendidly at Lady B.'s!" A hostess nowadays is merely expected to minister to the creature comforts of her guests, provide them with pretty, well-dressed girls to amuse them, a good cook, good wine, good shooting, golf links within easy reach, and a motor "handy" to save undue exertion. If she were to attempt to entertain them or lay herself out to be agreeable she would, ten to one, be described as an "awful bore," and if she took trouble to contrive entertainments, plan diversions, or make elaborate arrangements for her guests' amusement, her pains would be rewarded by rude repulses or possibly the flight of one or more males, by whose departure her "party" would be threatened with proximate dissolution. Such fuss and refinement might have done very well for the gentlemen in trunk hose and ladies in fardingales, or even the beaux of George the Fourth, but for modern "men" and "women" who aspire to be smart, why, the thing is perfectly ridiculous! A luxurious and up-to-date country hotel, with free-and-easy barmaids to chat with, and a first-rate chef and cellar, such is the ideal country seat of to-day. Manners, ceremony, refinement! All these were good enough

for the early Victorian age, when people called themselves and felt they were ladies and gentlemen, and no Society paper existed to chronicle their movements or to make it worth their while to ruin themselves on jewels and dresses. How well I remember the last of that extinct race, the ladies and gentlemen of England with their highly artificial manners, their profound bows, their studied waves of the hand, their stiff, unbending backs, their upright carriage, and their flowing periods! They still lived, a few of them, well into the 60's, and were looked upon with awe not unmingled with admiration as survivals of a period of restraint and discipline which, however much admired by the rising generation in the abstract, we were wholly unwilling to bestir ourselves either to imitate or attain. In vain these lofty beings used to impress us with their own lofty sentiments and feed us upon the glamour of a day that was past and gone, killed by the hustle and bustle of a vulgar, restless, rushing age, pushed out by pork pies and crinolines, peg-tops and sacques. In vain they told us "noblesse oblige" when we lolled on easy chairs, smoked before ladies, or lounged in the drawing-room with hands in trousers' pockets. In vain their attempts to galvanise into life the old-world courtesy and deference, the respect for age, the reverence to parents, the subordination to superiors, the self-control, self-repression and self-denial, which accorded so well with buckram and lace, buckled shoes and silk stockings, high stocks and ruffles. Away with it all! We would have none of it. Ease, self-indulgence and comfort, such were the idols of the rising generation! It is not surprising that by the end of the nineteenth century democratic vulgarity should boldly stalk abroad, mocking at refinement and jeering at the manners of an age that will never return.

Few things in the whirligig of events and fashions are more significant than the recent disestablishment of the "lady" and "gentleman," partly under democratic pressure and partly at the bidding of the Anglo-American Press. Whatever the theory to the contrary may be, as would appear from the French legend about equality and fraternity, the tendency of a democracy is not, and probably never was, to imbue the upper classes with an abiding sense of fraternity towards the lower, but rather the reverse. In the United States the doctrine of equality is trans-

lated in a singularly one-sided manner. It invariably takes the form of gross presumption on the part of the lower classes towards the upper, which, in the trans-Atlantic variety of the Anglo-Saxon race, has been well typified in the saying of the New York "tough" (Anglice, rough), "I guess I'm as good as any other man, and a damn'd sight better too."

My first democratic awakening on landing in the States was when the conductor of the train pointed out to me a certain person as the "gentleman who had cleaned my boots," adding that "he guessed I was the man who had to pay." No self-respecting nigger in those days (whatever be his demeanour in verse upon the boards of the Empire or Alhambra) ever ventured to refer to any of his companions in society in any other terms than that of a "coloured gentleman." I have a distinct recollection at Chicago, at a complimentary benefit to a well-known pugilist, of an eloquent speech by the chairman of the opera-house, who wound up his high-flown eulogy with the remark, "In a word, ladies and gentlemen, I can only say of Mr. Shady F. Buggins, that he is a perfect gentleman!"

It is scarcely surprising that the highly-advertised and fastidious plutocracy of Newport and New York, who, to quote their own favourite jargon, "are just about the most tony and high-minded society that the world ever saw," shrank with horror from a term which had become so long vulgarised by familiar adaptation to the inmates of the bar and the kitchen, and with which, in consequence, they were disinclined to be further associated. The result was that with an unconscious truthfulness which singularly belied their intentions, but, at the same time, strictly coincided with the demands of fact, New York "Society" resolutely abdicated the inappropriate title of "lady" and "gentleman" in exchange for the despised designation of "man" and "woman"; while, not to be behind-hand, our English ladies, unashamed in this and other things to lavishly copy the follies of their trans-Atlantic cousins at the suggestion of the omnipotent Press, followed suit and abolished in name what they had long ago abolished in fact. For where all self-restraint is banished, and reverence for all things human and divine are alike thrown into the melting-pot of private opinion, while the upper classes have resolved not only to take



their language from the gutter Press of America, but their wives from Chicago and their novelties from New York, it is no marvel that upper-class girls and boys jostle each other like 'Arry on a holiday and copy the dances of the kitchen, the manners of the public-house, the slang of the street, the songs of the music-hall, and, as far as they dare, the dress of the actress or courtesan.

Just as the honesty of the greater number will always be exactly gauged by the strict limitations of the law, and, consequently, loose laws bring loose morality—so, too, the manners and habits of women will never rise much above those of the men of the society which they frequent.

The vast superiority and greater refinement of American women over the men must be largely attributed to their superior culture, the debasing effect of trade upon the men, and the emancipation of women from male control, which is a marked feature of democracy in the States, while it forms another of many striking points of resemblance with her sister Republic of France.

One would suppose that Englishwomen might have done much to stem the rising tide of coarseness and vulgarity, by striving to insist upon a higher respect for women, more reverence for age, a stricter discipline, and by discouraging freedom of manners and license of conversation at least in their own homes by the due exercise of authority in their characters of hostess or parent. But again from America, upon the wings of the Press, more epidemic than influenza and more catching than scarlatina, comes that subtle spirit miscalled the "Breath of Liberty," which laughs at respect, reverence, discipline, and authority, and scorns the parental yoke which our ancestors raised to the rank of a sacred duty, and which the most ancient and polished nations of the world have always counted the first and highest of virtues. This it must be confessed has greatly contributed to increase the difficulty of reformation. Much blame, however, must still be set at the ladies' door. Had they but firmly resisted the invasion of their greatest rival, tobacco, and stoutly defended the sacred portals of the drawing-room and the boudoir from its profane inroad, they might at least have retained the more timid, and by that no less attractive, nymphs in her train, and so beguiled the enemy man from his natural lair of smoking-room

or snuggery. For the effect of this surrender sinks far deeper than would at first appear. The first step consists in refusing to the hostess and her fair retinue those attentions of acknowledged allegiance and duty which are, or at least used to be in former days, their due; secondly, the magnetic power of sex-attraction— influence of woman over man, now alas! reversed—seldom fails to draw the young ladies in man's wake to billiard, smoking-room, or conservatory; from that to ladies smoking cigarettes is but a step; next, it naturally followed that the elder ladies, deserted by the men, frequently adjourned to the billiard-room or the conservatory in self-defence, and by so doing sanctioned the unhallowed orgy, which in its turn reacted so deeply upon the erstwhile habits of civilised society that individuals are to be found who firmly believe themselves in every way entitled to the name of gentlemen, who do not blush to come to table in the easy but pestilential smoking-jacket of bachelor life!

The very furniture soon marked the change from refinement to comfort. The graceful if fragile chairs of the last century gave way to the divan of Oriental listlessness, or the Chesterfield sofas, and roomy lounges of the club, the billiard and the smoking room. Furthermore, with slovenly attitudes an unconventional mood arises which favours the slipshod talk of privacy, the smoking-room story, and the retailing of the current newspaper trash of the day, which year by year, with their increasing fertility of social scandals, invite public attention more and more to the follies and immoralities of the idle rich. Nor is this the only evil brought in its train. A free-and-easy "camaraderie" springing up between young men and women of similar tastes, which begins by calling each other by their Christian names, rapidly degenerates into that mutual contempt which the copy-books tell us is the result of undue familiarity. This again reacts upon the matrimonial market, since young men who can bike and golf, shoot and smoke with girls to their hearts' content, are obviously less likely to confine themselves for life to the society of one; while, on the other hand, undesirable attachments spring up which later become difficult to shake off, or else thoughtless marriages are secretly hatched up, which neither reason nor a parent's wiser counsel can afterwards thwart or prevent.

And here we arrive at the "Great Divide" or "wasser-scheide" which separates the Anglo-Saxon from all other civilised nations, and of which I may at once say, the more the foreigner gets to know our country and our ways the more senseless and idiotic does he hold to be our social habits in this cardinal respect. I have before observed that, incredible as it is, our nearest neighbours, the French, with whom we have been in the closest relation for the last fifty years, still differ more egregiously at every point of the compass from ourselves than any other nation upon the globe. I will even go as far as to say that I defy an Englishman or woman to understand French people, or *vice versa* unless they have lived among them from infancy and know their language as well as their own: and the rather for this reason, that though there are probably far more Englishmen of the upper classes who are fairly well acquainted with the French language and frequent the social circles of the gay capital, they can never expect to gain that knowledge of good French society and that friendly hospitality and admission to the intimate home-life of the people, which it is so easy for Frenchmen to attain in England.

What concerns us here, however, is the outcome and result: and any of us who examines current Parisian literature, Press and novels, cannot but feel his cheeks burn at the unmerited insults which are levelled at our fair compatriots. While, on the other hand, however disinclined one may be to admit their conclusions, or averse to believe that the case is as bad as they assert, one cannot exculpate Englishwomen from the strongest blame, and deny their powerful contribution to the formation of such an opinion. For, strange to say, much as it shocks the Frenchmen that so helpless a creature as he believes a young and innocent girl to be, should fight the world for herself and travel or walk about unprotected and unwatched, our American cousins, who share in very much the same practices with ourselves, only rather more so, are not nearly so harshly dealt with by the foreign critic. With much truth and acuteness he does not fail to observe that their education, however destructive to that delicacy and refinement which is associated with maidenhood, is expressly designed to secure that independence and freedom of thought and action which enable them to make their way in the

world single-handed. An American girl is trained from childhood to rely upon herself, and is virtually at an early age turned out of the parental nest, so to speak, to shift for herself, encouraged to chose her own companions, to form her own connections, live her own life, and select a husband for herself.

It cannot be denied, by its most partial upholders, that the English system, as far as the higher classes go, has nearly all the disadvantages of the Continental, without any of the advantages of the American. Her education is even now, although in every vice and folly we seem to hang on to America's tail with ever-increasing assiduity, just as unsuitable as ever it was, or perhaps more so, because the important element of reliance and respect for parental opinion and authority, along with that reserve and bloom of innocence which formed the charm of the older generation of English-women, has given way under the assault of a democratic press and the influence of a vicious stage and literature to a contempt of control joined to an affectation of universal irreverence, garrulous gush, boisterous freedom, or affected rakishness, which, added to the reckless disposition that comes of ignorance and inexperience, is apt to contrast strangely in the foreigner's mind with the timid ways and downcast eyes of the virgins of his own native land. Yet these same self-willed, self-confident young ladies, full of ignorance and animal spirits, rejoice in kicking over the traces of maternal subjection when and wherever they possibly can, and, not content with throwing old-fashioned conduct and chaperonage to the winds—coming and going, riding, byking, and even travelling alone (or otherwise), at their own sweet wills—insist on being permitted freely to rove as they please among the fields of literature, art, and philosophy. The newspaper and the circulating library with its ample stores are at their full disposal for better or for worse; the theatre with all its seductions and degrading influences is their ordinary recreation; while the newest gossip of the clubs and the last society scandal, along with the dress, features, shape, and doings of actors and actresses, form their familiar topic of conversation. The natural results of this seasonable and well-designed education can be easily discerned, and the consequences naturally flowing therefrom can be daily studied in the gutter-

press, where divorces, and all the varied scrapes which flesh is heir to, are daily dished up at breakfast time to a delighted public.

While stoutly refusing to believe that my fair countrywomen invariably throw themselves at the head of every good-looking foreigner they come in contact with upon a first introduction, or that they habitually flirt with their grooms, make love to their coachmen, and frequently invite them to fly with them to a foreign land, according to the current belief of our volatile neighbours, I have myself witnessed, abroad and at home, so much that tends to confirm that impression, that I can hardly wonder at the prevalent opinion entertained about English girls on the Riviera and wherever else they mostly congregate; while beyond all question and cavil, both at home and abroad, the conduct of Englishwomen in their intercourse with foreigners of all kinds, from a waiter to a count—and such is the credulity of the British matron that the two individuals are frequently interchangeable—display a freedom and audacity which even an American girl cannot equal or excel.

As to the well-known foreign legend, which so many Englishwomen are apt to treat with scorn, and affect to disbelieve as a childest invention of the fertile brain of the carping foreigner, I may say that, while I write, the daily papers here in Tuscany are recording—as a matter of common occurrence—that “another English Countess” has married her coachman. And at any rate it is rare that a month passes without distinct proofs being afforded, that however fateful to feminine charms in other lands is the garb of Mars, the ladies of England find nothing more seductive and enthralling than the scent of the stable and the shiny hat and white leathers of the pad-groom. If any doubt arises upon this head, let the incredulous ride in Hyde Park at any time of the day and they will see enough to satisfy themselves as to two equally remarkable facts: first—that parents, knowing the propensities of their daughters, constantly allow them to ride out alone, accompanied by these fascinating messengers of Cupid; and, secondly, that ladies of all ages and degrees are manifestly eager to take advantage of such opportunities, to the utmost extent that their public situation admits. I hear the ladies exclaim, “But surely it is far better to let

girls make or mar their own fortunes! or are we expected to believe that the foreign methods are so successful as to be worthy of imitation?" The answer to the first objection is contained in the previous paragraph, which proves in itself that at any rate a very large proportion of English girls, and still more notably women, either from fault of education or excessive independence, are not only unprepared, but conspicuously incompetent to direct their own lives or secure their own happiness. It is surely unnecessary to study the Divorce Courts to satisfy oneself of this: "*Si monumenta quaeris circumspice.*" In the next place the English matron invariably objects, "Surely you would not have a girl taken out of a convent and given to a husband she has never seen?" To this I have only to say that the notion that French girls are married willy nilly to a man whom they had never seen, or, in other words, that they are bartered for money or position by their parents, is a legend of precisely the same value and accuracy as the ancient French equivalent, that Englishmen sell their wives at Smithfield. In the words of the grammarians "the exception proves the rule." From my own experience I should say that a far larger proportion of marriages of all classes turn out well in France than in England, and, furthermore, that the subordination which religion and training alike closely enjoin upon their daughters, tends to foster a high respect towards the choice and opinion of a parent in matrimonial matters, with results which are wholly beneficial, as is apparent to all who have eyes to see. Finally, their entire system of education leads to an elevation of sentiment and refinement of mind which would cause any union that was not sanctified by their parents' desire, and consent, and cemented by the indispensable sympathy of common tastes, to be eminently repulsive.

It is erroneous to suppose that young couples abroad are betrothed by their parents without their consent or approval, or that they have not ample time and opportunity to become acquainted with each other before their marriage, while, on the other hand, they are carefully shielded from the dangerous intimacy permitted in England and America, which is too often attended with undesirable results. As a fact, the education and training of our young women of every class is, like nearly everything else in England, the fruit neither of reason nor experience

and still less of forethought, but rather a confused jumble of tradition, of old practices inapplicable to present circumstances, and time-honoured prejudices destined in some incoherent manner to fit girls to enter a world where vulgarity is in the ascendant, refinement is unknown, and self-advertisement the "be all and end all." After all, why should we expect more of our girls than of our boys, or indulge the vain hope that wives and sisters should soar so high above their husbands and brothers? For are they not made for each other? and are they not mutually formed and moulded by common sympathies and interaction, more especially in these days of intersexual liberty? Before remodelling the wife and daughter, depend upon it we must first remodel the male youth of the nation and renew in him the antique virtues which have run to seed.

When evil days fell upon the French nobility, who, with all their grace and elegance, their high code of honour, and unrivalled eloquence, followed the example of the dissolute Regent of Orleans and the still more infamous Louis Quinze in ruining their country and dissipating their estates, not a few sacrificed their cherished blood by a base alliance with the daughter of a city shopkeeper or contractor. Not so our English gentlemen, who for the last century have jostled each other in debasing their blood and ruining their pedigree, not from any financial necessity, but because their elegant and refined tastes tempt them to scour the ranks of the Chorus, the bars of the beer-shops, nay, even the back streets of New York or Chicago for the mothers and wives of the future English aristocracy. It is not for money that Dukes marry actresses, marquises dancers and music-hall singers, or prominent politicians, beguiled by the novelty of a Yankee twang and Yankee assurance, prefer the Newport belle or the pork-packer's daughter to the best-bred beauty of Belgravia; but because their depraved tastes turn loathingly from refinement and virtue, preferring the husks of swine to the calmer enjoyments of a cultivated home.

#### SHOPKEEPING IN HIGH LIFE.

Nor is this, after all, very surprising in a country where every one toadies and mimicks the ways of the rank above them, and where even their Princes delight to bask in the smiles of American

actresses and shopkeepers' wives, in preference to the more refined, if monotonous, company of English ladies. Moreover, since no social stigma is attached to mis-mating however far-fetched or grotesque, but rather the reverse, why should we expect that a young man without taste or self-restraint should hesitate to marry the first object of his passion, when he has neither the refinement to feel her deficiencies, nor the wholesome dread of social ostracism before his eyes ! Indeed, in these days it is not easy to find out what really will secure social ostracism so long as the sinning individual duly pays his quota to society by entertaining handsomely, and, above all, keeping a good cook. Indeed there is scarcely any limit to the depth of self-abasement to which an English matron, with daughters to sell, will descend in the pursuit of tickets for a highly-advertised ball or concert, though its giver were Beelzebub himself : and, to hear her talk, one would suppose that the future happiness of herself and her charges depended on their "breaking the record" of ball-and-party-going during the Season.

Naturally, the same broad toleration is exhibited towards social crimes as towards City rogueries and Company swindles, as regards which, what seems at first to be Christian charity is really nothing but the promptings of vulgar interest and self-advancement. The same commercial instinct which properly belongs to a nation of shopkeepers is beautifully displayed in every act and transaction of "Smart Society," which, although novelty and show is as the breath of its life, is nothing if not up-to-date, and alive to every trick and turn for gaining an honest or dishonest penny according as opportunity offers.

Even in the 80's, when gentlemen were just beginning to eke out their living by dabbling in trade and commission agencies, one looked already askance at one's neighbour at a bachelor dinner lest he should pull out his price-list and offer you a sample of his celebrated brand of cigars ; while nothing was more usual than to be button-holed by a smart young man of irreproachable exterior, as the merits of the host's wine were being impartially discussed, and to be quietly informed in a mysterious whisper that he was prepared to supply you with a better wine at the lowest price for cash !

In former days the dull boy of the family in the higher classes



was invariably sent into the Army under the two-fold, if absurd supposition, first, that brains were not required, and, secondly, —brains and timidity being in some mysterious way associated in the popular belief—that absence of brains was a sure indication of valour; while, in the middle classes, the dull boy was always sent into a solicitor's office, as being the only profession in which wits go for nothing, since whate'er befalls his client, a lawyer always wins, however the cat jumps. Of late years it is not unusual for parents to argue similarly as to their less studious offspring, concluding with equal want of logic that because they are unable to master either Latin or Greek, or any other qualification of a gentleman, they must be eminently suitable for a commercial career. Their career, as far as my experience goes, however brief, is seldom glorious. After a short experience in dunning their acquaintances for orders, which is apparently the only commercial labour they are ever known to undergo, they usually become too offensive (if impecunious) to be endured in any kind of society, and gradually drop out of notice until they reappear in the Bankruptcy Court, and thus secure a passing share of public attention and sympathy. Time was when such catastrophes were considered disgraceful, but the only remark one hears nowadays on such occasions is: "Very unfortunate for Jones, to be sure—it must be an awful bore, public examination and all that, don't you know!" etc.

But the worst was yet to come, when the money-making infection spread to the ladies. It must not be supposed that the fair ones are less inclined than their husbands and brothers to court the golden shower. I know ladies of the bluest blood, especially Scotch, who have scarcely an idea in the world beyond "doing their neighbour." For it is a strange fact, which no one of experience will contradict, that the gentleman or lady who are not bred and brought up in a commercial atmosphere and trained to it, not only go to far greater lengths, but develop far more reckless forms of roguery than anything that can be found on "Change" or Leadenhall Market. In short, the familiar French expression of "jeter le froc aux orties," as applied to the abandonment of all moral principle which proverbially characterises the unfrocked monk, is singularly applicable to the situation. Nor do they stick at commission agencies.

Unless you know your neighbour's character, it is unsafe nowadays to talk of flowers at a garden-party, lest the charming young woman with whom you discourse should use her fascinations to press a contract upon you for a firm of which she is agent "to do your table decorations for you, or flower your house inside and out." You hesitate while you praise the electric fittings of your lovely hostess lest a sweet voice should exclaim in most insinuating tones that she is "doing electric on commission and would be charmed to fit you up throughout on the shortest notice at the most reasonable terms"; while an incidental observation that you think of going to Homburg at the end of the Season produces an instant assurance from some lady present that "if you are uneasy about your health" she "will be delighted as an agent of the 'Buryemquick Insurance Company' to get you better and cheaper terms than any other office in London."

Nor do they stop here. There are lady perfumers, lady packers, lady photographers, lady dress-makers, lady hat-makers, and lady picture-dealers. Before long no prudent lady of experience will venture to compliment another upon any article of her attire, for fear of being seized, clapped into a brougham and carried off to "dear So-and-so, who makes such lovely hats (or dresses) with such taste, don't you know, and awfully cheap, quite a treasure," etc., etc. As for the lady motor sellers, you can hardly walk out without treading on their toes. For besides the ladies who tout for a thousand-and-one companies (mostly fraudulent, or they would not want ladies to boom them), there are other unauthorized ladies who, with less excuse and more impudence, delight in deceiving nine of their intimate friends into paying a "delightful motor firm" 10 per cent. more than their electric broughams are worth, in order that they may get their own out of it for nothing! Others there are who, having arranged for a commission as tout for an amateur dress-maker, spend their time in beguiling their friends to go to "dear Mrs. So-and-so, whose wretch of a husband ran through all he had on the turf. Such a nice woman, you know, my dear, and such taste! You remember how well she used to dress, and how H.R.H. used to admire her—well, she has set up in Dover Street, and will make you a dress for forty guineas as good as you can get at Paris for fifty," etc., etc.

Our "Society" is at last reaping the full benefits of its stage-training.

In April, 1907, after reading in the *Epoca*, at Madrid, that so-called "Living Statuary" was drawing large audiences in London—"that asylum of pretended prudishness and real hypocrisy"—I myself, with my own excellent eyes, saw at the magnificent Empire Theatre in Leicester Square, men and women exposed naked to the public view, under the pretext of representing sculptural groups, their bodies whitened or gilt, apparently in order to evade the police laws against public exhibitions of naked men and women—but to all intents and purposes as devoid of clothing as any corybant of heathen days, or any slave-victim of the cruel circus in the wicked days of Nero or Caligula.

The splendid theatre glittering with a thousand lights—revealed among the audience as many bejewelled maids and matrons, aye and barer limbs and shoulders, than ever the heathen ladies of old Rome dared to display in theatre or circus. I turned to the young soldier by my side—"How is it possible that these women tolerate such a sight as this, and are not even ashamed to bring their daughters with them?"

"I suppose," he replied, "they think that whatever they see upon the stage is all right!" How true! yet what a plain admission of the corrupting effect of the stage. Englishwomen, it would seem, do not try to raise the stage, but are content to follow it to its lowest depths. Nor is this all.

As this book goes to press I read that Manchester has long ago revolted against these revolting exhibitions, and that there the more healthy and active forces of morality have caused them to be discontinued *in all but the very lowest music-halls*. The London County Council, however, till 3 months later, take no steps against them—and the police, it seems, are powerless to act without their initiative. At length the London C.C. is shamed into bringing the scandal before their board—upon strong pressure from divers Religious bodies. A resolution against the "Living Statues" was carried by a very narrow majority. And it is significant that nearly all the Rank and Wealth of the L.C.C.—what the Press calls "Society"—were arrayed in favour of these bestial and unchristian exhibitions!

## CHAPTER XXIX

### FASHION

As the Roman Matrons of old reserved all their warmest sympathy and attachment for their Bona Dea, so ours for Goddess Fashion, who perhaps ought more properly to be considered under the article of Religion in view of the undoubted fact that the conduct and daily life of those who aspire to have their doings chronicled in the newspapers, as well as the still larger crowd who struggle to follow in their wake as best they can, worship no other during six and three-quarter days out of seven. She it is, too, whose magic law divides the ladies, very much as it does the men, into two camps of Rogues and Fools. But with this striking difference that whereas among men, as I have before remarked, the Rogue, by which we understand the undiscovered rogue, is the envied, admired, and the respected of all, it must be admitted that among the ladies, the simple sisterhood outnumber so largely the wily minority, and the natural tendency is so strong amongst women, however much they like a bargain, to despise and disown the commercial element even when they trade in secret, that the position of commission-seekers and lady-schemers generally is far from pleasant or agreeable.

Let us pause an instant to dissect, and if possible disarm, the Goddess before whom all women alike bow the knee. What is she? Fashion, here in England, is nothing more than a carefully-planned conspiracy, first practised by the American Press, and later transported into England, by which certain leading manufacturers of ladies' goods, in council assembled, alter existing fashions, or in plain English get rid of their old last year's stuff and induce the asinine and much-led-by-the-nose public to believe that salvation is only to be found by wearing the particular goods with which they are, or intend to be, heavily stocked. To an inner council formed in close relation, but subordinate to them, is assigned the more difficult and delicate task—again through the Press, and Pressmen and women—of deceiving the ladies into the belief that "nothing else will be

worn this year" than the goods they have resolved to "push." Now as the primary intention of these gentlemen is, firstly, to induce women to throw away last year's clothes, and, secondly, to waste as much money as possible upon such tissues and fripperies as shall last them the least possible time, they may be fairly described as a vast organization for the spread of wasteful luxury.

And remember this, ladies of England! that it is yourselves who are responsible for the follies of those around and beneath you. You fondly imagine, or try to, that you are doing credit to yourselves and your family, by buying the clothes that the shopmen tell you are in fashion, by decorating your fatuous persons with whatever trash your tailor or milliner suggests, by adorning your empty heads with any ridiculous object which your hairdresser advises, by piling up or otherwise distorting your appearance in copying the last Ethiopian atrocity or the latest Japanese fancy, by painting your faces with the latest powders and cosmetics, or disfiguring your head with the latest erection prescribed by your hat-maker! and after making yourselves the slaves of five separate designing rascals, you will vow and declare that you have done all these things to please yourselves, while you know in your innermost heart that you are ruining yourselves solely and wholly in order "to be in the fashion."

The same state of things applies to every woman and girl in the kingdom. Each one of them in her degree does her best to ruin herself to keep in the fashion, and fondly hopes to look well in the eyes of the men, who for the most part laugh at her for her pains: and thus the infection spreads through the land: while you, ladies of England, who ought to know better, and do know better, commit these follies with your eyes wide open, and, what is more, willingly endure, nay, glory to wear, the livery of intriguing rogues who pocket your money and laugh at you for your pains. Then when the gentlemen carp at your follies and fashions, you vow that you never dress to please them, but to please yourselves. Most true it is that the gentlemen usually refuse to believe this assertion, and out of their foolish vanity contend that the only possible aim of woman in decorating and adorning herself is to waylay and subdue the enemy man. But in this, as in many other ways, they do women a great injustice;

for, being well aware of the intrinsic ignorance of the average man in regard to the shades and subtleties of female toilette and their possible combinations, as well as of his intense indifference and contempt for feminine efforts in that direction, it would be but labour lost for woman to put herself to any special pains to please him were she not spurred on to exertion by a far stronger stimulus, namely, that of outvying her sisters, and obtaining the stamp of their approval in the race for good dressing and elegance, and above all in that still more thrilling Public Dress Competition, which, however carefully hidden from the prying eyes of the opposite sex, constitutes one of the most powerful organisations for the joint purpose of extracting cash and enlisting the entire available female energy and talent of the richer classes upon the side of "Millinery." It is this "secret council" that develops woman's noblest efforts and stimulates the feminine soul to its highest activities. Woman's Epsom is the Park, the Theatre, the Carlton, and Piccadilly. They are all "runners": and the Blue Ribbon of their Turf, is to be written up in the Press as "the best dressed woman in London."

Now as this organisation is entirely framed to gain power on one hand and place their victims in the position of utter subjection on the other, the utmost unanimity and secrecy are desirable if not necessary for the proper conduct of operations. As I have before stated, the manufacturers are the prime movers of what is called the Fashions. They have their agents scattered about in Society and Press, just as the French Government has its plain-dress and official spies scattered evenly throughout the land, and having settled the plan of campaign for the following season and what stuffs they will produce and put upon the market, their next step is to artfully gain its acceptance by skilfully directed Press articles and the tactful co-operation of highly-paid but impecunious members of the aristocracy, who are not ashamed, for pay, to minister to the nefarious conspiracy.

The uninitiated, that is, the greater number of ladies who enter for the "Great Dress-and-Beauty Stakes" in London, have a touching belief in the genuine origin of fashions as attributed to this or that Princess, or this or that Duchess, which must be followed and copied under pain of social

ostracism; nor do they doubt but that they can attain the suffrages of the Press through the suffrages of their sisters in ball-room or evening party, wholly unconscious of the fact that praise is only accorded in the newspapers for services rendered and expected; or for "cash down."

Much astonishment has been caused of late and much discussion aroused as to the reasons of the change which has taken place in the social customs in regard to dining out in restaurants and hotels; but the explanation is perfectly simple. The large hotels, who conspire with the Fashion-mongering Press for their mutual benefit, duly post their myrmidons at every lobby, as is well known to those who frequent such places—though the fact is carefully hidden from all male belongings—in order to "enter" the female starters, as they, so to speak, "strip in the paddock," precisely like fillies starting for the Oaks. They are then written up or written down, humbled or exalted, purely and simply according to their strict cash value. It will be perhaps thought that this criticism refers to dress alone. Not at all. For those who aspire to have their beauty lauded, the same Organization serves for both. I once knew two very ordinary girls, who eventually, through the machinations of their clever mother—who was a past mistress in the art of advertisement and diplomacy—succeeded in capturing two wealthy earls. They fell easily and willingly into the nets of the spoilers, and were soon induced to spend fabulous sums in dress by the emissaries of the "Secret Council." Not satisfied with being written up to their hearts' content as the best-dressed Countesses in England till people began to believe it, they presently aspired to be also the most beautiful. Scarcely had the bargain been struck and the cheque changed hands when, hey presto! allowing a gentle graduation of praise so that the change of tune might not appear too abrupt, they were first described as looking nice in such and such a dress, and then looking "handsome," so that the public might not be struck with the suddenness of the transformation, then "lovely," till in less than two years they not only found themselves famous as accredited beauties of the first water, but stranger still, their friends, from hearing their praises continually sung in every key soon began to doubt whether they were not themselves mistaken in

considering them as plain as ever ; and at the present hour, though considerably on the wrong side of forty, they can hardly cross New Bond Street without paragraphs in a " Society " paper describing their clothes, their elegance, and their beauty, much to the astonishment of their male acquaintance, and presumably to their own private satisfaction !

Thus, then, the fascination for women of frequenting restaurants and hotels can easily be explained, when we consider that each timid *débutante* who has got the " tip " from her dress-maker, virtually " enters " at Claridge's or the Savoy for the " Universal Dressing Stakes," with the distant expectation that she may possibly carry off the honours of Press approval, and win the blue ribbon of the best-dressed girl of the day.

But I shall perhaps be told, " Surely the Greenferns and Mesdames Violettes, and Muchchinkas have much to say as to what shall be or shall not be the fashion ; anyhow Lady So-and-So and the Duchess of So-and-So have done much to suggest if not start certain fashions with which they have been invariably credited." Let me assure them that this is a complete delusion, though, to be sure, it is a special feature of their crafty system for the Press-cum-Manufacturers-Fashion-Combination to let a certain number of their most lavish customers into the secret, and indeed pretend to admit them to a partnership in their proceedings. But the utmost tangible result, in return for the honour done them in pretending to take their advice, is an empty profession of the deepest deference and condescension *in language* on the part of an adroit ambassador of the tape and scissors, who, after extorting by judicious flattery or cajolery a certain acquiescence to his scheme, forthwith proclaims in the Society journals that such and such a fashion has owed its origin entirely to the well-known skill and taste of Her Grace the Duchess of Two Stars or Lady Dash, who expressed herself delighted with the examples and illustrations presented to her by the eminent dress-designer, Flanigan O'Slattery, Esq., whose well-known artistic skill had succeeded in realizing her most fervent dreams and aspirations ! On the other hand, the retailers are the mere servants of the manufacturers, and are practically ruled with a rod of iron by the " Secret Council " which determines the course of fashion in conjunction with the



leading dress-piece manufacturers and wholesale costume-makers who form the governing coalition.

As an example of how easily the fair sex can be hoodwinked and betrayed against their own interests, it was found that the plain and simple hairdressing style of four or five years ago was ruinous to the interest of the knights of the curling-tongs. Needless to say, the all-important consideration as to whether women collectively were improved or the reverse by the costly manipulations of the hairdresser did not enter into the question. They simply subscribed a large sum of money, and bribed the managers of the Fashion-Mongering-Association to publish an edict or two in their favour, with the result that we now see; namely, that the various systems of torturing the female head which were in vogue in Paris a year or two ago are now in full swing in England, to the wholesale destruction of Englishwomen's peculiar charm and the unbounded satisfaction of our tonsorial aliens.

#### BOND STREET PESTS.

And here it may be worth while to speak a passing word of protest against the scandalous view adopted by the powers that be with regard to the fortune-telling and chiromantic rogues which infest the fashionable purlieus of New Bond Street.

One of the many signs of decadence which we observe in the later and more corrupt days of the Roman Empire, and one which invariably points to the enervation resulting from excessive luxury and self-indulgence, is the decline of religious faith, and the corresponding rise of superstition. With the universal greed and longing for luxury and excitement and restless forms of amusement, the mind, precisely as the body is similarly acted upon by alcohol, forsakes the placid faiths and simple beliefs which constitute the surest ground of virtue in the Individual as well as the State, and gives place to a craving for short cuts to wealth, which gambling with cards, or stocks and shares, and, given the necessary credulity, supernatural assistance, is alone able to satisfy.

It is often said nothing can be more incongruous than the spectacle of Atheists and misbelievers of all kinds resorting to gipsies and clairvoyants and soothsayers to learn their future destiny; but the explanation is not far to seek. There is nothing

more strongly founded in the mind of man than the belief in some external supernatural agency which in his weaker moments, or hour of stress and sickness, he invariably implores for help, be his skin black or brown, yellow or white.

When a nation falls away from Religion and no longer regards it as absolute truth, but as a system which one man may adopt and another reject according to individual fancy, the eternal desire to pierce into the future, and the ever-recurring springs of hope which are always present in the human mind, and need but the slightest encouragement to revive, urge them to resort to any agents, however unpromising, who profess the power of obtaining for them a glimpse into the future, or the possession of such temporal benefits as they specially covet.

In many important nations of the past, and many inferior nations of the present day, where no definite teaching of a Supreme Being exists, men propitiate what they imagine to be the powers of evil, by practically worshipping that which we designate as the devil, holding it to be more important to stand well with the authors of evil than to sacrifice to the author of good. For, as they acutely argue, "The good spirits will do us no evil, so we can safely afford to disregard them; whereas bad spirits will surely do us some evil unless we buy them off, by humbling ourselves before them, and suing for mercy at their hands."

It is well known that the gipsies who offer to cross a servant girl's hand with silver, telling her that she will meet a dark man and a fair man, advising her to prefer the latter to the former or the former to the latter as the case may be, are severely prosecuted by the police as deceivers and swindlers, while it has been held by the highest judicial authority that this legal insurance against private folly and credulity, which is so liberally extended to the more ignorant classes, should be rightly withheld from the educated in view of their superior education and the consequent knowledge which that education is supposed to impart. But nothing can be more fallacious than to imagine that our so-called education diminishes credulity or prevents imposition. It would be just as absurd to lay down a rule that only the poorer classes should be defended from swindlers and thieves, though it must be confessed that in point of

stupidity such a view would match many other of our judicial theories.

It is more than probable that the closer realisation of the struggling aspects of life and earlier intimacy with commercial usages tend to diminish natural credulity, and to fit the poorer classes rather than the richer for grappling successfully with roguery, swindling, and the varied methods by which money is unlawfully obtained. And even if the higher classes were more equipped for coping with commercial roguery by their superior education, it would not follow by any means that they would be more proof against that peculiar form of credulity from which those who resort to chiromancers and other similar rogues usually suffer, and which may be defined as a mixture of equal quantities of inborn credulity and religious yearnings gone astray. Added to this, a gambling spirit and the continual craving for the acquisition of wealth by sudden or surreptitious means tend to foster a certain blind belief in chance and the mysterious operations of luck, which, so far as the description and definition of its own votaries may be trusted, closely resemble the attributes of those inferior divinities which engrossed a large share of the worship of the "decadents" of old Rome in pagan days.

Numberless are the stories, no doubt more or less authentic—for where there is much smoke, there is always some fire—of ladies who have been vaguely informed by these expensive if monotonous sibyls that their youngest child would be brought to the verge of death, or that their eldest son at the war would perish, and who have been so strongly impressed with the prophecy, that their brain (if any) has received, from the constant stress of expectation and anxiety, a shock which has been attended with fatal results.

If New Bond Street and its neighbourhood has become the recognised Alsatia of these pernicious parasites of the human species who batten upon the follies of the idle rich, in almost equal quantity swarms of disreputable aliens have of late years camped down in that fashionable quarter, and with the connivance of the gutter Press through specious advertisements and lying testimonials, ladies of the upper classes with more money than brains are decoyed into their dens, and with an

artful mixture of coaxing, threatening, and blackmailing are robbed with far more skill, ingenuity and perseverance, and exposed to far greater risks under the very nose of the police in the centre of the greatest metropolis in the world than in the wildest parts of Sicily, or amongst the most savage tribes of Central Africa.

Then there are the beauty doctors, the manicurists, the horde of arch-liars who promise new skin and face and busts, and all the rest of the filthy crew who prey on woman, and subsist upon her evergreen credulity.

It may be appropriate here to repeat what I have often said before, and is in this connection amply justified, as to the solid conviction entertained by misdoers of every class and of every country, that England is the paradise of the rogue, the swindler, the adventuress and the impostor. Daniel O'Connell used to boast that he could drive a four-in-hand through every English statute that was ever invented. No doubt he spoke the truth, or, at any rate, he managed to prove the truth of his assertion in a great many cases. Certain it is that whatever fresh criminal statute we enact or amend, the lawyers always manage to "draw" or define it in such vague and indecisive language, that the judges frequently fail to construe it in the sense in which it is intended, the police misunderstand it, and after endless litigation it is generally resettled on a completely new basis, almost invariably on the laxer side, and leaning in nine cases out of ten to the advantage of the guilty rather than the innocent. God alone knows—thanks to the gutter Press and its hellish associates—how many an undiscovered conspiracy or secretly organised web winds itself about rich women and draws a mysterious net around them, separating them at first from the influence of husband, brother, or lover, and gradually but too often dragging them down to a life of shame and misery, in which not the least active agents for their destruction are the ladies' maids in whom they frequently place the highest reliance and confidence! Other agents, too, are employed, female demons in disguise, under the pretence of buying second-hand lace and shoes and such cast-off raiment, to obtain lists of the female inmates of the best houses. They closely ascertain the habits of all the richest ladies in London, and their invariable practice is

to first suborn the maid and bribe her to induce the ladies in her charge to frequent some of these foul establishments. Being, as a rule, the most ignorant and credulous of all the human family (for some occult reason) since the days of Terence and Plautus, the lady's maid, even if honest and well-disposed, usually forms an apt and quick scholar. Ever ready to accept any belief, and believe in any promises however contrary to sense and reason, she is either used as a dupe to decoy "her ladies" into the toils of the spoiler, or, if she proves to be more than ordinarily vicious, she is gradually elevated to the position of a willing and highly-paid confederate. In nine cases out of ten the lady, from a feeling of half shame, half timidity, dreads to put the fallacious promises and offers of universal beautification which she receives, to the test of scientific experience, by inquiry or consultation in quarters less open to suspicion. The natural tendency of women to secrecy and mystery seconds their nefarious schemes. Fearing to consult her mother or family doctor, or let a word fall that would arouse the suspicions of her brothers or parents, she easily slides down into a path which she dare not disclose and which too often leads direct to misery and ruin. Still greater is the danger and more sure and safe the conspiracy where young ladies possess a fortune of their own or large dress-money allowance or any other source by which money can be obtained without applying to parent or guardian. In all cases, "to compromise" is their Alpha, and "to blackmail" their Omega.

Lady Beauty-doctors, with their thousand-and-one cosmetic appliances and lying promises of facial improvement, restoring youth, hiding wrinkles and grey hairs, and what-not, form an enormous co-operative association who play into each other's hands by that system of mixed commission out of which the greater number of the subordinate members of the various professions make their living. Precisely as in the case of the dressmaker-and-manufacturing coalition, which operates upon the ladies in the direction of leading them, often by force and fraud, it is true, but, where it is possible, by the more gentle means of persuasion and cajolery into the flowery paths of fashion, so, too, the beauty-giving fraternity maintain in their pay, besides a host of touts, certain impoverished hangers-on of the aristocracy, who keep up their snug cottage at Maidenhead, or their little house in Green

Street and their well-appointed brougham, entirely by acting as decoys to the scoundrels, male and female, who prey upon the follies and credulity of fashionable womanhood.

In order to appreciate the rational character of our Criminal Law and enjoy the full flavour of the judicial pantomime, it may here be observed that while everywhere else in the world it is considered necessary for the protection of that portion of the community which is worth preying upon, to carefully register and obtain a return from every lodging-house keeper in the town of the ways, occupation, and means of existence of their lodgers—in England, from an excessive respect for the individual, as it is averred, but, in my belief, out of sheer indifference and dislike to rule and method, the police not only know little or nothing of these criminal classes and their habits and ways of life except what can be obtained by an occasional visit in plain clothes as a pretended customer, and only then in specially suspicious cases. And even though they become thoroughly aware, from the nature of their advertisements, that designing rogues insert them with the sole motive of fleecing the idle rich, the beautiful British theory of personal rights—like the “Cherub that sits up aloft and watches over the life of poor Jack”—is sure to step in to befriend and shield from harm the swindling brotherhood in our midst.

#### OUR CIVILISATION.

Few words in the English language are more misapplied than civilisation. It is interesting to listen to the average instructor of youth in school or college, the parson in lecture hall or pulpit, or the politician illuminating the public at large on platform or in the columns of the Daily Press, and hear the same self-gratulations, the same familiar compliments, the more acceptable because flattering to ourselves and our self-esteem, about our numberless items of superiority over those who have gone before us, the glories of our world-wide Press, commerce, commercial navies, and the modern delights supposed to be conferred upon us by the far-reaching inventions to which we owe our modern conveniences and much of our modern luxury, our quick means of travel and social intercourse through steam and telegraphy, and our latest annihilation of time and space through the medium of telephony.

So often are these overpowering advantages hurled at our heads from every platform and in every daily paper, that few of us stay to dispute or qualify the blessings which they are supposed to dispense, or challenge our right to look down upon our forefathers, to whom such discoveries would have appeared, not only improbable, but impossible. Just as the oft-quoted old lady who confessed "that she did not understand very much of the sermon to which she had listened, but drew much consolation from that blessed word Mesopotamia"—how many of us, if we were competent to fully analyse our innermost sentiments, can deny that they feel through their frames a glow of pride when preacher or speaker refers to the magnificent progress of our age as compared with the benighted beings that have gone before us?

Now civilisation, an exotic addition to our language imported from old Rome, however exhilarating when applied to ourselves, calling forth as it does the horrid memories of Imperial Rome, must surely be tinged with a lurid light. For what is civilisation but Roman for "townification"? to use a mongrel if expressive term which may well be "understanded of the vulgar."

I will not found an argument on the trite axiom that God made the country and man the town, beyond stating the incontrovertible fact which every day brings home more forcibly to those who look beneath the surface of events, that the growing townification of the country is the most alarming symptom of our body politic which we have to provide against, and that one of our leading and universally recognised problems for the improvement and preservation of our race is the countrification of our great cities.

But surely my impatient critics will exclaim, "It cannot be denied that enormous progress has been made in all that relates to the well-being, comfort and happiness of men and women since the dark days of the middle ages. A man must be blind, deaf, dumb or idiotic to deny our advancement in all that makes for human improvement. Let him but look around him in every street of London, monuments of human activity in every sphere rise up to tell the tale for themselves, of human effort and human improvement. Perhaps he considers the London of to-day inferior to the London of the Black Prince, and prefers the dimly lit streets—with their narrow parapets, ill-paved roadways

and the overhanging, half-timbered houses that almost met each other in the narrow streets of old London, with each their creaking signs instead of convenient numbers over the doors—to our broad thoroughfares, crowded with every conceivable means of locomotion, cabs, trams and omnibuses, to say nothing of tubes and underground railways; the shops with their plate-glass windows and gay fronts; the public-houses and restaurants inviting the thirsty traveller to stay at every step, instead of the latticed windows and dingy hostelries which have now for the most part crumbled to dust; and last, not least, the level, smooth and well-swept roads which make locomotion a pleasure, instead of the slippery or rough-paved streets of old London or Paris, of whose ruts and holes and unsavoury contents we have such graphic accounts from the diaries of travellers of other days.”

To this I reply, if material comforts, or, in other words, what ministers to the grosser part of man's nature, is to be the gauge of human happiness and prosperity, it might be doubtful whether our gross and material age should not carry off the palm of superiority, where human effort is almost exclusively directed to the invention and elaboration of some fresh ministration to bodily comfort and sensual pleasure. Or if, again, it could be shown that a greater number of the English people participate in these advantages, such as they are; or, again, if it could be shown that these inventions and multiplied incentives to luxury had produced a sensible amelioration of the lot of the greater part of our race; then, indeed, much might be said in its defence. But is there any honest man who looks below the surface and divests himself of the cant of the platform and newspaper and froth of every-day talk, who will lay his hand on his heart and declare that to the best of his belief and information the greater part of our race at the present moment enjoy a larger measure of even material happiness and comfort as compared with the picture presented, say, by Sir John Fortescue in his “*De Laudibus Angliæ*” five hundred years ago? There is no question that luxuries for which we now pay a comparatively moderate sum, five centuries ago were almost unattainable, and that the variety of food set out in every shop to tantalize the penniless passer-by, exceeds the wildest dreams of ancestral luxury; nor is it so certain that they would have enjoyed them as we do, or whether



their healthier palates would not have scorned the manifold spurs to a jaded appetite which underlie the thousand-and-one stimulants, sauces and spices which modern invention calls into being. At all events, it must be owned that even if their diet was more simple, and the variety of their food, their attire, their means of locomotion and of entertainment of mind or body were greatly circumscribed as compared with the present, we have every reason to believe that the quality was better, the work more sincere and the articles sold more genuine, and therefore that the body and mind were more wholesomely nourished and more happily provided for, than in our own age of chemical, literary, artistic, and in short universal falsification.

Nor can it be honestly said in our defence that material wants are more cheaply satisfied in these days. Obviously, the common necessities of life comprised in the term of meat, drink and clothing were necessarily much lower five centuries ago than now, as rated by money value; but let it not be forgotten that even here the ability to purchase these necessities of life by current wages were far greater in those so-called dark days than they are now, and though wages have risen two and three hundred per cent. in some cases, the greater number of wage-earners were far more able to lead a life of comparative comfort, so long as they were prepared to work, than they are at the present hour. Without passing beyond the bare requirements of healthy subsistence into the sphere of luxury and what may be called unnecessary stimulants which have come in our degenerate age to be almost objects of prime necessity, I boldly maintain that more money has to be spent, and the money so spent is more likely to be wasted and spent in vain, upon almost all objects that minister to comfort and indulgence of luxury in modern than in ancient days. With the solitary exception of male attire, where usage in bygone days demanded more show and splendour than in the present, there is but little difference in the values or, in other words, the cost if properly estimated, not by the amount of coin paid, but by the relative price of material and labour required to produce the article, between olden days and now; while, as for the quality of the ancient article, either in the genuineness of the material or the faithfulness of the work and make, and the more rational adaptation of the material to

requirements, the palm must certainly be accorded to our forefathers. It must be admitted that at no time in the history of man of which we have any record has wastefulness in food or dress reached its present height; nor, as far as we know, has more national wealth been dissipated in the production of useless, flimsy fabrics born for the hour upon which infinite labour is expended and which are constructed entirely to attract the purchaser's eye rather than commend themselves to his reason.

But even admitting our material progress in many particulars, it would be a narrow purview which merely took in the external and visible signs of progress and omitted the moral, physical and æsthetic progress which make up the higher and nobler requirements of our complex human nature. I say advisedly physical, as it is all too common to find modern educationists so little impressed with the admirable Roman axiom, "*mens sana in corpore sano*," that they think education consists of an operation similar to pouring beer into pint pots and leaving off when they are full—oblivious of the fact that unless the body is concurrently strengthened in proportion to the imagination, the gravest evils result. Indeed, to this perhaps a larger portion of our current ills may be traced than any other; and nothing is more singular than the fact, that in spite of greater medical and official interference and the boasted lights of modern science, chiefly owing to the curse of Machinery, which I may parenthetically observe is always quoted "*ad nauseam*" by the wiseacres of the press and platform as among the chief blessings of our age, our physical degeneration during the last century and a half is even more conspicuous than our mental and moral deficiencies. This is the more inexcusable because Germany and France had already shown us the way as early as the middle of the last century, when their governments, becoming alive to the great evils resulting from the overcrowding of towns and the confinement of the younger folks in mills and factories, had already taken every means to abate the evil by establishing and encouraging public and private "*turnvereins*," and other measures to which their system of universal conscription greatly contributed.

Unfortunately, when at length Great Britain awoke in 1870 to the conviction that her system of national education was the most backward and the most scandalously inadequate of any national

system in Europe or America, instead of applying the remedy which our neighbours had adopted to abate the physical evils wrought by machinery upon the working population, she confined her national efforts and system to that branch of education which may be termed "mental development" without any effective admixture of discipline or bodily exercise. Nor was it till thirty years later, shortly before the outbreak of the Boer War, when the large demand for volunteers and recruits had exposed more clearly the difficulty of attaining the material required, that serious attempts were made to apply some remedy to the physical deficiencies which were admitted upon all hands. And it should be noted that this uprising of the loom and workshop, the mill and manufactory—which not only degrades our free-born British workman, but chains him to the bench for long hours under the slavery of Vulcan, and exchanges for the open-air life of the forge, the booth, and the small workshop, the fetid air of the poisonous factory, the steaming atmosphere of the cotton sheds, the death-dealing chemical works, the steel-grinder's shops or the sweater's den—was strictly coincident with the observed physical degeneracy of the working classes.

Machinery is also responsible for the fouling of the fair face of nature, causing millions to toil in blackened grimy hovels or foul factories, standing amidst blackened mounds of slag, instead of working like men in the open sunshine among God's works, looking forward as a respite from toil to their poor but homely fireside in the comfortable old-world cottages under shady elms, which are still the delight of our country-side and which we moderns seem unable to reproduce.

If physical well-being be the test of our civilisation we have only to look back upon the records of the past and read of their manner of living to be well persuaded that "there were giants in those days," and that the ordinary life of even the well-to-do, five centuries ago, would put such a strain upon the endurance and constitution of us degenerate moderns that none but the strongest and toughest could have possibly outlived the ordeal. Then, too, each man from hour to hour was prepared to defend himself and his possessions and all he held dear from the robber, the midnight thief or armed adventurer. Each day might bring him a conflict upon which his family, nay, all he had in the world, might rest

upon the issue. From earliest boyhood his play-hours were serious lessons in self-defence and military art, where carelessness or inattention was a matter of life and death, and a rigid discipline of which we have no idea in these days was exacted from the mimic sports of childhood equally with the ruder contests of mature years. The higher classes, who in a measure shared the indifference to book learning which characterised the meaner sort, at most possessing a smattering of Latin and French, so that they could follow the priest's words at Mass, pay compliments to court ladies, or indite a sonnet to their mistress, made the use of arms and the study of the art of war their chief object in life, unless, indeed, they were devoted from childhood to the priesthood. All luxury and relaxation were forbidden as tending to enervate the body and render them unfit for their martial career : and, with the exception of a Court pageant or an occasional masque or dance, hunting was the only pastime or relaxation from the sterner duties of keeping watch and ward, heading a foray, or sharing with the meanest trooper, toils and hardships, and privations of which in these days of luxurious commissariat and quick communication we can scarcely form any adequate idea.

#### VULCAN IN WAR.

If engaged with the enemy, however, each man at least felt that he would not be murdered in his sleep by a shell, or blown out of his hammock by the skilful application of a hand grenade on land, or a torpedo at sea, but relying on his good sword, his strong arm, and above all upon his God and the justice of his cause, sallied forth to fight with a light heart and easy mind as blithely as to a fair or village green. Compare him with the soldier of to-day, compressed into a tight tunic, numbered and marked like sheep, and forced to keep time as part of a rigid machine of which each human being is but a cog, hired to fight for quarrels he neither knows nor cares for, hurled into action by too often incompetent officers, to whom the death of a thousand, more or less, is a matter of small concern, his wants provided by a commissariat who deprive him of even the minor joys of loot and plunder which went far to make war palatable in olden days—uncertain at any moment whether he shall be struck down by shell or ball emerging from a distant wood or masked battery,

while smokeless powder and extreme distance almost defy retaliation, or even discovery. Or if his lot be cast at sea; instead of sailing in the good old wooden walls which one could cannonade all day without sinking, and which served to protect old England's honour in days gone by, or boarding the foe with cutlass in hand, trusting to his strength and skill to overbear his enemy—what is his lot now? Cooped up in an iron pot which in the tropics greatly resembles a heated cauldron, knowing full well that in time of war the chief object of his enemy will be to sink him with all his fellows, night or day, by a well-directed torpedo or a cleverly adjusted mine, or if he survives all treacherous midnight murderous attacks and succeeds as far as getting into action, the odds are even, that the first broadside he receives, perhaps even while the enemy is out of sight, will sink his vessel, and all his share of honour and glory will be confined to a watery grave, along with five or six hundred of his fellows, without having the proud satisfaction of feeling that he has struck a blow for his country! Here, indeed, again is the dread slavery of Vulcan displayed in its grimmest colours.

No longer the English knight puts on his armour and gaily advances to the fray with his mistress' glove in his helmet, trusting in his good cause and his strong right arm to earn death or glory! Perchance an evening paper may record that my Lord Tom Noddy, incautiously cantering forward upon the staff of General——, was drilled through the heart with a Mauser bullet proceeding from an unknown rifle at some distant spot which was not located owing to the use of smokeless powder: or a paragraph will explain that owing to the careless buoying of a submarine mine that promising young officer, Captain Montgomery, who but lately obtained command of the finest ship in His Majesty's Service, was unfortunately torpedoed, or possibly blown up by a submarine mine just as he was sighting the enemies' ship in the offing, and was sunk with five hundred men all told of various arms, causing a loss of between two and three millions to the nation. If this is our boasted civilisation and this the end to which our progress tends, for Heaven's sake let us turn round and go backwards. If any redeeming feature could be recorded in the manner of doing, the object attained or the philosophy which dictates our course, there might be something

to be said upon the other side ; but to drift like a cork upon the sea of events and follow we know not whither the insane vagaries of the high priests of Vulcan, each nation following its own blind prophet's mark, is surely a most pitiful ambition. At the present rate of progress it needs but to follow the lead of Vulcan and his minions for a century more, for us to fight like water rats or crabs at the bottom of the ocean, until the very stones will rise and judge us, and the flat fish at the bottom of the sea will look pityingly upon our vain efforts to rival them in their own element, while the shrimps and lobsters will ask each other in their moments of leisure whether the all-devouring monster man is at last attempting to qualify himself "to be a man and a brother?"

Can any worse reproach be brought upon our so-called civilisation than to think that we are breeding up men to value their lives so lightly, and are able to purchase their degradation at so cheap a price, that the sons of those who fought at Trafalgar and Waterloo are not unwilling, for extra pay, to fight the enemies of their country in a "submarine" like crabs and shrimps upon the ocean floor, with nothing but a Japanese mouse between themselves and eternity!

It is true that from time to time a faint awakening of national conscience is perceived, when solemn meetings in deference to its more tender manifestations are held at the Hague or Paris, and, wondrous to relate, resolutions are come to, placing beyond the pale certain of the very latest devilries of Vulcan, which are invariably adopted by the majority of nations represented, in those cases where they find the advantage is *not* on their side ; or otherwise, where the violence or numerical military strength of the objector makes it dangerous to resist, humble apologies are offered, and diplomatic politenesses are exchanged without appreciable results. Thus dum-dum bullets, for example, are unanimously tabooed, and Great Britain brought to shame for her use of explosive bullets upon inferior races, for the simple reason that such explosive weapons had not been already adopted by the greater number of nations represented at the conference. In all probability, if another conference should chance to ventilate the question, the dynamite-charged hand-grenades invented in their more deadly modern form by the Japanese, and quickly adopted by the

Russians—by which the rifle-pits and trenches into which these missiles are thrown become instantly converted into a heap of mangled limbs wrenched from the sockets, and faces from which every human semblance has departed—will, if the same are not already adopted by the other nations, be suppressed with a vast show of indignation, while the majority, having recently spent enormous sums in competing with each other for the very latest dastardly invention for blowing up vessels in the dead of night, will as surely escape all reproach or comment.

Let us never forget, and take pride as Englishmen in the fact, that a hundred years ago our Parliament put the French to shame by publicly disowning the acts of our Indian allies in the great French War for the possession of Canada, denouncing the atrocities committed by the Indians employed on the side of each belligerent, and in a full house declaring that Englishmen would have no act or part in carrying on war by means of midnight slaughter, surprises, and such treacherous and murderous methods as formed the staple of Indian fighting. Nevertheless, let us also recollect, that if this marks the high water of British pride and British humanity, it also proves the distance we have travelled on the down grade of incivilisation; for, while we read in our evening papers of the destructive effect of the new dynamite-hand-grenade, and how, when used in the Russian trenches, instead of decent burial of the heroic defenders, all that could be done was to sweep up the shreds of bone and flesh and mangled limbs that marked the scene of the devastation, so far from expressing horror at the scene and registering a vow that such inhuman methods shall at all events be confined to Asiatic nations, our engineers are already vexing their infernal brains to equal, or, if possible, better their example!

I will not again repeat the tale of how, following blindly the lead of the blind prophets of Vulcan, we have poisoned our seas, which should, as in old England and in modern Japan, furnish the chief food of our inhabitants by pouring out recklessly the manurial products of the country, destined by Providence to quadruple our food output, and nourish our ever-growing population, into every creek, estuary and river of our land, thereby filling our oyster beds with typhoid and diphtheria, driving our shore fish further and further afield, and, crowning disaster of all,

using our entire resources of pure fresh drinking water to carry the foul flood to the sea upon its death-dealing errand! Nor need I advert, with more than a passing mention, to the reckless folly with which Gladstonian - versus - Disraelian - Competition has placed the balance of power in the hands of a town-dwelling artisan class divorced from the soil and interested solely in the uninterrupted enjoyment of cheap foreign food, so that every measure which might be devised, protective or preferential, for the improvement and reinforcement of agriculture, and the increase of our food supplies, is, unlike in any other civilised country, a task too dangerous for any government to face. Hence an impoverishment of our supply of strong, healthy men fit to fight for their country, and the deterioration of the fine old breed of British mastiffs, who defied the power of France and Spain in days of yore.

Can we derive any satisfaction moreover from a survey of the human products of our boasted Civilisation? Shall we be comforted by seeing the hobbledehoy who emerge from the distasteful confinement of city-den or noisome workshop at the evening hour with unkempt hair, grimy sallow faces and shambling gait, to sally forth an hour later, cigarette in mouth, leaning upon the arm of a long-legged precocious, over-dressed hussy, making night hideous with their snatches of music-hall songs or cockney repartee, or, if time and money serve, scrambling in at the end of a "gallery-tail"; or, on a Bank Holiday, dragging the same feminine appendages, who not infrequently tower above their "apology-for-an-escort" in a manner that suggests female rather than male protection, in the third-class carriage of a cheap excursion train bent on airing at seaside or remote country spots the flaunting vulgarity of the London streets! Or again, is it consoling to observe the habits of the adult working-man, for whom the British tax-payer has been compelled to make such fruitless sacrifices during the past thirty years: who too often spends half his last wages on a Saturday night without thought of the morrow, and whose painfully acquired smattering of unsuitable knowledge, obtained at the public expense, is on leaving school instantly thrown aside in the vast majority of cases, leaving not a trace behind; whose improvement, except in the matter of greater pretentiousness of



dress, is confined to the ability to skim the *Daily Mail* or painfully spell out the police reports of *Lloyd's* or *Reynolds'*, and whose powers of association, which constitute the only direction in which he displays any mental energy, are entirely directed to increase the pay and lower the quality of his work! Or shall we pride ourselves upon the improvement effected in his woman-kind, who, through cheap education which seems to serve the sole purpose of engendering distaste for work of any sort, substitutes for the home-made clothing suitable to their rank and work, the ready-made flimsy finery, and for food the cheap ready-made patent-mixtures gathered from every corner of the earth, tempered with artificially-whitened bread and dubious tea, which we owe to our boasted advance in chemistry and transport, instead of the good old English beef and honest beer and bread which won us the fields of Creçy, Poitiers and Agincourt!

Or shall we take pride to see my Lord Tom Noddy, who, after an expensive course of education, to which all the wisdom in the world is supposed to contribute, is understood, as far as he can articulate, to divide his views upon life between what he disapproves of, to which he applies the elegant term of "Rot," and what he likes, such as golf, polo, or pheasant-shooting, which he describes as "awfully jolly"—who refers usually to his public duties as a "fag," and his civic duties and obligations generally as a "grind"; or who, if condemned by family practice to the painful exertion of taking a seat in the Lower House while awaiting his hereditary privilege to determine the affairs of the nation in the Upper, is usually understood to deplore his fate with (for him) most unusual emphasis, upon the ground that the Council of the Nation has greatly deteriorated by containing a larger selection of pushing, thrusting business-men drawn from every class, instead of being as formerly the most gentlemanly and easy-going club in Europe.

Or again, can we derive any contentment from the appearance of our towns? In the North of England the very air is obscured and the trees and corn perish under the poisonous fumes of the glass and chemical factories, while in the Midlands whole tracts of country are blackened with grime and covered with the refuse and slag of the adjoining mines, and the distant views, obscured in part by the thick smoke which hangs in the

damp air and is only dissipated by a gale of unusual severity, are disfigured by the tall chimneys and hideous external marks of Machinery and Modern Progress. Wherever a beautiful valley delighted once the eye, so surely now a hideous viaduct, like a box planted athwart, spans the once-smiling space—the shriek of the locomotives and the rattle of the waggons disturb the summer air and pain the ear, while even the eye, which would fain rest on pleasant fields, and rural scenes, where formerly one could at least commune with nature “far from the madding crowd”—is now distracted with hideous advertisements setting forth the merits of Pears’ Soap or warning him against the consequences of neglecting Beecham’s Pills.

Nor need we penetrate into the gloomy recesses of the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturing towns with their eternal smoke and fog, their deafening clatter of hammer and shuttle, their tall warehouses blackened with foul mists, their dull, dark streets filled with noisome smells and sounds, and their population, pallid and yellow, bent, deformed and sickly, lifeless and listless in their grimy rags as if oppressed by the dark shades of Pluto, from whose dens they emerge in the intervals of their toil; let us turn rather to London, the premier city of the world, the seat of the wealth, the rank, the beauty and power of our world-wide Empire. There too our senses are painfully assailed by the hideous sounds that proceed from a thousand objects all vying with each other in unpleasantness and ugliness, the discordant shriek of the steam whistle mingling with the rattle of omnibus, lorry or tramcar, each crowded with loathsome advertisements of every hue and form, varied by the dismal hoot of the motor-car, foul bird of ill-omen, closely followed by a deadly stench which Styx itself can scarcely rival, or Erebus produce. Or, as we strain our eyes for some pleasant object in the distance, our vision is curtailed by the dense fog of winter or the brown haze filled with minute particles of straw which rises in summer from the wooden pavements; and we are doomed to feast our souls upon the dull monotony of the hideous rows of houses, or rather of walls with holes in them for doors and windows, alternating with vast spaces under construction where unsightly hoardings display a discordant jungle of advertising imbecility, profanity or indecency. Or if the

eye, painfully seeking rest, endeavours to gain a glimpse of Heaven above, it will surely rest upon a perplexing network of telegraph and telephone wires, chimney pots and smoke abaters of every shape that can be invented to rack the human brain or eye, while the few trees here and there where nature is allowed to exert its beneficent influence, are, except in midsummer, black, dreary, and forbidding, as is our own boasted Civilisation.

Is it our dress that can assuage our æsthetic irritation or convince us that perchance in some details we have not gone wholly backwards, but are still enabled to lay claim to progress in the right direction? Having in male costume arrived at the conviction that nothing exceeds in appropriateness or beauty the horizontal section of a stove pipe—fit emblem of our modern civilisation—we have this hundred years and more tenaciously clung to that eccentric form of headgear along with the customary frock-coat and the leg-bags we term trousers, confessedly as ill-suited for displaying the perfections of the human frame, but at the same time as cunningly adapted for the concealment of their deficiencies, as any garments invented since the Fall. Not content, moreover, with nourishing these horrors in our midst, by virtue of our enormous trade we scatter these strange blessings throughout the globe, and, with a fervour surpassing our missionary zeal, supplant the more suitable and picturesque dress of savage and Oriental alike by the introduction of the stove-pipe hat, the tight-fitting varnished boot, the black frock-coat and dusky trousers of our gloomy civilisation.

It is a significant fact, that when our oracles of the Press think fit to enlighten us by glancing at our progress, or whenever our statesmen or our politicians set themselves to tickle our vanity upon the platform, they rarely, if ever, compliment us upon our growing wisdom, virtue, or culture, but reserve all their eloquence to describe our growing wealth! They tell us how our income-tax produces yearly more and more; how our Post Office returns testify to our increasing prosperity, and they pelt us with statistics about our imports exceeding our exports, and such-like phenomena, which they describe as highly gratifying and satisfactory! What a truly British picture! On one hand, the vampires of the Press—much like the doctor who, while feeling a millionaire's pulse, is considering how many guineas he is likely to

extract from his patient's pouch—smack their lips as they appraise the fortune and dog the doings of the latest schemer from "The Rand" in anticipation of tasting his blood, gleefully reckoning up each addition to their ranks as a fresh victim upon which to fasten their fangs—while, on the other hand, the hungry politicians, not unlike a butcher who tenderly feels his fat bullocks one by one, and surveys them with an air of grim complacency, turning over in his mind their various "points" and considering at what date they will be fit for killing, cynically regard the British public, not so much in the light of human beings, as subjects for further taxation according as their collective profits become greater or less. Surely no foreign satirist need exaggerate the unconscious humour of such a tale as this ! We pride ourselves no longer on being "merry and wise," just, prudent, pious, truthful, valiant, healthy or strong, but upon rearing in our midst an ever-increasing stock of plutocrats bursting like ticks with the product of their fellow-countrymen's labour ! Such are the fruits of our modern civilisation !

The wise old Greek and Indian philosophers, two thousand years ago and more, cudgelled their brains to find out the "summum bonum," the be-all-and-end-all of existence. Thank Heaven no such lot is ours. For now we know from the lips of all that is highest and wisest in the land, that the supreme test of civilisation is the accumulation of pelf. And here once more we perceive an instance of that strange British habit which I take to descend as straight from the cant of our Puritan forefathers as rain from the clouds, viz. that tendency to publicly maintain by precept and example systems and practices which we privately abhor. For which of us shall lay his hand upon his heart, and, looking round him, assert that we are better or wiser than we were before we were inoculated by the microbe of modern so-called progress and civilisation ?

But where shall we fix the date of our inoculation ? Shall it be since we first made a god of Vulcan, who by steam, electricity, submarines, torpedoes, and other diabolical inventions claims his hecatomb of yearly victims, and poisons the land with the fumes of his workshops and the air with his smoky chimneys ? Or shall we say before the deadly era of statistics, when nations were free to work out their own salvation in their own way in the fear of

the Lord, and the accursed race of politicians had not yet learnt to put bit and bridle in their jaws to drive them to their own perdition in the mad race of competition and insane over-production? Or shall we say since kings and statesmen for their own selfish ends learnt to make barrack-yards of their countries, keeping half their male population under arms, like wolf-dogs in the leash, ever ready to hurl them upon a foe, and with an irony still more bitter, grinding their families to the verge of starvation in order to make them pay the cost of their own enslavement, by teaching them the lying tale that the country demands the sacrifice, while in truth and fact they merely serve to gratify their rulers' pride? Yet of such is our boasted civilisation made up! These be thy gods, O Israel!

Or who, again I ask, in camp or smoking-room, in public-house or drawing-room, in parlour or in workshop, will venture in the privacy of friendship or in the society of his fellows to assert that all is well with us, and has no misgivings as to the route laid down, or the direction in which we travel? Or which of us in private life would say that men are happier now, or more contented with their lot, or have more faith and trust in Providence, or that they talk more earnestly and soberly or discourse more wisely in pulpit or Press, in magazine or pamphlet; that there is more wit or learning in discourse, more eloquence in Parliament, more sincerity in politicians, more honesty in lawyers, more truthfulness in tradesmen, more trustworthiness in servants, more purity in woman, or more filial respect in children—so far as can be learnt in book or story—than in days of yore? Nay, do we not, day by day and hour by hour, in Press or pulpit, market-place, tap-room, or ball-room, hear the same unending cry that we are going from bad to worse, that our education is a failure and our civilisation a lie? Progress we certainly have, but is it upwards or downwards? there's the rub! That we go faster through the air in express trains, motor cars, or what not, cannot be denied; nor is it unlikely that we shall soon add balloons to our experiences of quick travelling! But "Cui bono?" That is the question! For if we are not the arbiters of our own destiny, but permit ourselves in these days of multiplied associations and limited companies to be hurried along at the bidding of our new gods, whether Vulcan or Pluto I care not, without our express-

desire, intention, or consent, then surely we are abdicating our manhood, and are falling lower than the beasts of the field. Or do we elect to be the mere slaves of momentum and gravitation like the astral bodies, and being once for all intimately persuaded that in this world "pace is everything," suffer ourselves to be projected like sky rockets, telegraphic messages, or comets, at the highest possible velocity, we know not whither! and when told, like children, by the inventors of each novelty in turn, "*that we ought to like it if we don't,*" we tamely swallow the specious tale, and hold our tongues, suffering, in the cause of Vulcan and Pluto, whose minions wax fat and thrive on our simplicity, more ills and torture than we should be willing to undergo for the Christ Whom we falsely profess to follow?

Or are we to find consolation in our motor cars and motor 'buses, which claim their yearly hectacomb of victims and fill our highways with dust and fetid stench to gratify the tastes of the idle rich, who lyingly tell us that it is a "valuable industry" and a national boon, in order to fill the land with foreigners and foreign productions, paid for with English gold?

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE "BOUNDER-ON-A-BOILER"

THE road pest of earlier days was the "scorching fiend" who scoured the country-side as well as the suburbs of London, darted past your leaders, or swished past your carriage, unseating the unused equestrian and unnerving deaf old ladies in the roadway by a sudden whistle, or the still more irritating insult of a sudden blast blown in their ears. The comic papers I recollect gave, in their free-and-easy way, the descriptive title of a Cad on Castors to these objectionable beings.

The pest of to-day, however, is the Bounder-on-a-Boiler.

Whether we look at him in the concrete, as an evil-smelling, oily, grimy individual with dusty hair and goggles—a cross between a German Professor and a bewitched miller—or at his female companions, even more unpleasant to look at if possible than himself, or dwell upon the ludicrous incongruity of his noisy, stinking boiler on wheels, and its amazing ugliness, or consider him in the abstract as a ridiculous person always in a hurry to get to nowhere in particular, it is difficult to say whether the whole turnout is most offensive to the eye, ear, nose or the æsthetic perceptions of the impartial spectator.

By what means the Bounder-on-a-boiler came to be firmly seated on our backs like an "old man of the sea" it needs no ghost come from the grave to tell us. In Anglosaxondom, whenever in doubt, it is safe to guess that money is at the root of the mystery. In plain English, Bribery has doubtless brought us to this pass: for I have too much faith in the sanity of my fellow-countrymen to suppose that members of Parliament would have chosen the moment that foreign commercial methods are, according to Mr. Chamberlain, on the point of overwhelming British Trade, to sell their country to the foreigner and fill the country with foreign stokers, engineers, drivers, and machinery, were they not highly paid to do so. All that can with any certainty be ascertained is that motors were suddenly and

surreptitiously empowered to set all the reasonable laws of the highway use at defiance, and make a railway track of the public roads, to the great annoyance of horse and foot-users thereof, by virtue of an Act of Parliament which varied and abrogated the existing law confining steam carriages to a maximum of 4 miles an hour.

Of course, like true British patriots, they must have highflown reasons to explain and justify their conduct—and these they duly flourished with tongue in cheek and complimentary fully-paid shares in foreign Motor Cos., swelling the pockets of their overcoats. Lying is ever the handmaiden of bribery all the world over—I beg your pardon, hon. gentlemen, I meant to say (more Anglico) Imagination ever waits on Beneficence! (and bank-notes, or fully paid shares, on both!) Rule Britannia!

The first and most popular mis-statement used by these gentry was to the effect that to introduce a flood of foreign motor drivers, mechanics, and engineers, supplanting a like number of Englishmen and filling up the country with foreign untaxed machinery and manufactured stuff paid for by British gold—was to be the salvation of British Trade—and the next, well—whopper, was that if hon. gentlemen! (Save the mark!) refused to set the foreign motor going on British soil they would nip a valuable British Industry (which did not exist!) in the bud!

From that time to this the foreigner has swallowed up the lion's share of the nation's "luxury surplus" (which would otherwise have been spent on British horsebreeders, dealers, farmers, saddlers and coachbuilders), and the country is flooded with non-producing and most objectionable aliens of the worst type from all parts of Europe. Such English mechanics as are admitted, merely desert other branches of skilled labour, which are thereby displaced or superseded without any corresponding national advantage. And to what end? why, of course, to enable my Lord Tom Noddy and Mr. Plantagenet Brown, M.P., to brace his nerves and ward off the spleen, by going "there and back" at 40 miles an hour, to the annoyance of the reasonable users of the highways, poisoning the pure country air with his stench and dust, heralding his approach by an unmusical and offensive screech, and parading his ridiculous disguise to the disgust of the rural population.



Now no one can reasonably object to such engines of self and other destruction being used in their proper place, any more than one would object to the Holyhead express going 80 miles an hour on its appointed track. Indeed, my own private opinion has always been that Alpine climbing, motor racing and ballooning are merely nature's efforts to expel otherwise objectionable elements from our midst.

There can, however, be little doubt that Motormania involves a more complete and greater waste of national wealth than any known amusement or luxury. The Motor Register of the United States for 1906 shows that out of 121,309 cars, thus far registered, 40,000 or, practically, one-third, have been disused or sent already to the scrapheap! By the same ratio it may be fairly argued that 1 in 3 motors in good order on 1st January, 1906, are already worn out, smashed or otherwise inutilised by September 1st of the same year. Thus, supposing English motors (as some estimate them) to be 35,000 in number, in full working, on 1st January, 1906, there would be 11,066 condemned or incapacitated by 1st September of the same year, and putting £500 as the average figure paid to foreigners upon each of them, out of 17½ millions sterling paid out of the country mainly to foreign workmen, about 5½ millions would represent an absolute loss of national wealth to England, plus a relative loss to her trade by benefit to her competitors' trade abroad, plus a relative loss by displacement of her own kindred trades, which the said amount, spent in idle luxury, would otherwise have benefited to a like extent.

Two arguments were advanced and two only, as far as my memory serves me, in favour of throwing open the highways to motors.

1. Motoring promises, as abroad, to become a valuable industry, therefore why nip it in the bud?

2. They "motor" abroad, therefore why not in England?

As for the first argument, it would seem by the above, in the light of the facts above stated, that "the Motoring Industry" must be regarded as a servile, venal and altogether unpatriotic introduction into this country of a flood of competitive trade, of foreign tax-free materials, and highly objectionable aliens.

In regard to the second argument, the fact that it was seriously advanced furnishes an amazing specimen of British stupidity, which cannot but impress foreigners deeply.

It is difficult to decide which notion is most repulsive to British patriotic pride, to perpetrate a breach in the most valued rights of Englishmen upon the plea of copying the foreigner, or to ignore the essential difference between our island and the Continent of Europe.

The most cursory knowledge of England and the Continent would enable any one of ordinary intelligence or honesty to remark that for motoring purposes the conditions are not only dissimilar but even the antipodes of each other.

The dullest traveller by rail from Dover to Brussels or Paris cannot but notice that our highways are rarely if ever straight, but curve and wind about and often suddenly narrow to a mere lane, even in the very suburbs of our Metropolis; secondly, they are usually, unless lately widened, far narrower than is common abroad; thirdly, generally closely beset with hedges and trees, blocking all but immediate view; and fourthly, in most parts of the South of England, deeply set and consequently running between high banks which prevent all look-out ahead: while the principal highways of the Continent, being mainly intended for the safe transport of troops and materials, are conspicuously the reverse. It follows that if logic and reason ever prevailed in England where money is concerned, national common-sense would have saved the situation, by virtue of the simple argument that no country on earth is less adapted to rapid road-travel than ours. But that is not all. Our land being far more densely populated, and railways traversing it in every sense, the danger at every point to inhabitants here is far greater, and there is far less pretext for making use of motors instead of railways, than there is in any Continental country.

The most striking feature of this innovation over and above its unsuitability as above demonstrated, is undoubtedly its Illegality, in the sense of being an unjustifiable invasion of one of the most cherished and widely-spread rights enjoyed by Britons of all classes, age and sex.

If I am told that this Act, being once entered on the Statute Book, cannot be properly termed illegal, then I return

once more to the common charges brought against my countrymen, that there are no rights in England however sacred which are not at the mercy of a Catch-Vote in a thin House expressly packed with red-hot partisans; and secondly, that the vast majority of Britons are too unpatriotic and indifferent to provide effective checks to this evil, or, indeed, care to place anything whatever out of reach of party vote or party passion, but cheerfully acquiesce in a condition of things, which, to all other civilised nations, seems fraught with the gravest peril. Beyond and above the special unsuitability of the *Motoring Facility Act* (as I may call it) to this particular country, and its Illegality, or if the purists prefer, its gross and uncalled-for invasion of our road rights, which must surely be reckoned among the most ancient as they certainly are the most valued of our civil rights—there remains the question of Reasonableness. For when the earliest and most cherished right of a people is threatened, if not superseded, it surely behoves the innovators in all cases to prove abounding and undeniable grounds of public utility. Can any such be advanced in favour of this new invader of the highways?

The idle rich, who appear to principally favour, abet and uphold motors, and unquestionably own at least nine out of ten of those now on the road, can scarcely plead pressing business as an excuse for the excessive speed which forms the principal count of my indictment, since their sole object is to enable themselves or their female companions to promote their digestion, or brace up nerves and stomachs worn out with overeating and underworking, by going "there and back" at forty miles an hour.

I freely admit that it may be pleasant for a drunken or half-tamed savage to dash through peaceful English villages in the dead of night, making night hideous with glare of electric light, and blare of fog horn, now waking the slumbering villagers and spreading dismay among quietly browsing herds, now terrifying belated old women or sleepy carters in the deep dark lanes—almost, indeed, if not quite as amusing, as to run amok like a Malay maddened with hashish or tumpek, without the inevitable penalty of death to end up with. Death, do I say? Oh, dear, no! We English are far too civilised—too

up-to-date—for such brutal methods. We must not shoot down a motor-maniac like a mad dog, even if he acts precisely in the same manner: for he is under special legal protection. Who knows—he may possibly be a Scotch premier, “going a-golfing,” or a German prince in a hurry for his dinner!

I submit we have no room for drunken or half-tamed savages here. Besides, we grow plenty of our own in all conscience without importing them from abroad. Nor does it seem exactly reasonable to provide them with legal engines of mischief like 80 h.p. motors, or airships with grapnels hanging at the end of a ship's cable. Not that I would for a moment insinuate that every man who drives a motor is necessarily a drunken savage, but what I do emphatically assert is that every drunken, reckless savage is most assuredly a motorist.

Similarly, in explanation of my heading, though every man who bestrides a boiler is not necessarily a bounder, none will dare to deny that every bounder who can possibly raise the money will infallibly stride a boiler. And herein lies the special danger. The wild reckless drunkard or ruffian of other days would ride down the weak and inoffensive occupants of the King's highway on horseback, and his latter-day counterpart in my younger days would still sometimes terrorise quiet travellers as they swooped along the roads in roystering parties on their stealthy bikes in the dusk of evening, spreading terror among the peaceful community. But at any rate such men from the nature of things were necessarily fairly sober, or if overcome by liquor were speedily revived by the fresh air and rapid movement and the violence of their exertions; and in the second place a horse or bike implies sound health, good nerves and courage. Your motor obviously requires none of these things, while it supplies precisely the fillip which the drunkard or debauchee demands in order to complete his equipment, and make his happiness complete. Besides, your true out-and-out ruffian is nearly always cowardly and cruel, and your broken-down debauchee, or self-indulgent sot, who has no longer the nerve or pluck to sit a horse or bike, can still give full play to his vicious instincts. He can loll back in the luxurious cushions of his 80-horse power Mors or Daimler, urging the foreign miscreant who holds the wheel to “drive like hell, and scatter the yokels! if we flatten out a

few of them we shall only have to pay a hundred or two apiece—they don't imprison people for running over them, thank goodness, as they do in your own country, Gaston." Such are the *ipsissima verba* of a late Welsh Railway Contractor, as reported to me by a reliable witness.

If any one disputes my proposition, will he dare to deny that Tiberius or Nero, if they were now alive, would most assuredly have delighted in flattening out their subjects in a 80 h.p. motor!

Lastly, are motorists entitled by reason of urgent need to race upon the highway, while the horseman or pedestrian is very properly debarred from similar pastimes—on the grounds of public danger? Certainly not. The overwhelming majority of motors are owned and used as a tonic, an appetiser, rather than a means of locomotion, by the idlest of the idle rich, who do not so much mount a motor because they want to go anywhere in particular, but go there and back, because they have a motor and nothing else to do. Finally, they go as fast as they dare, according to their (usually Dutch) courage, partly because their female companions "love it" and partly because it's so "awfully-jolly don't yer know," and not unfrequently for the more practical reason that they want to get home for dinner or supper.

And such are British ideas of fairness and justice, at least among our legislators, that we landowners and farmers may be ere long double and triple taxed (though guiltless of motors ourselves) to provide roads for drunken and other male and female bounders out of the Metropolis to travel over, deface, and destroy, because forsooth "We can't do without our 100-mile spin in and out once a day, don't yer know."

In corroboration of the proposition I lay down, "that while there may be motorists who are not bounders, none will dispute that every bounder is a motorist," I open the *Standard* of to-day, August 16th, 1906, as a fair average specimen of the new perils to which peaceable road-users are exposed, and read, "Mr. Threestars Hennesey, of Tiptree Hall, Northampton, was at Malvern Sessions yesterday fined £6 and costs for driving a motor car in a reckless fashion in Wells Road, Malvern. An expert said the speed was 40 miles an hour." A little further

down I read under the heading, "Thief's Lavish Expenditure": "F. L., a German, was brought up on remand for sentence at Newington Police Court. . . . Inspector Simmonds said F. L. had committed jewel thefts at fashionable hotels in the States, and after the robbery at the Langham Hotel spent £160 in six days entertaining his friends to champagne luncheons, and motor drives" (of course!). *Verbum sapientibus.*

When motors were first loosed upon a peaceful community by a group of "able and disinterested legislators" (whose names and portraits I should be glad to possess in order to compare them with those that adorn the Chamber of Horrors at Mme. Tussaud's), it was commonly asserted by those who defended this outrage of popular rights that at any rate they would be a godsend to road-makers and a relief to ratepayers, inasmuch as it was obvious there would be less abrasion, less contusion, and consequently a greatly diminished road-repair bill to pay. Will it be believed that experience has demonstrated the very reverse to be the case! and according to the universal opinion of County Surveyors in all parts of the country, the injury done by motors is said to be far greater than that done by any horsed vehicle!! The Kent County Council Surveyor estimates the annual upkeep of many of his roads to have been doubled since motors have been in common use. Another County Council Surveyor declares "they strip the top coat of a road like a wet steam-roller."

This seems, therefore, to knock away the last prop from under a rotten concern. There remains only for motorists to say, "We've got the law, we've got the leave, we've got the money too, and if we haven't the reason on our side we certainly have the laugh." And they have.

If I shed so much ink upon a falling cause it is not with a view to convert my friends of the boiler-bounding persuasion so much as to impress upon the countless majority of "Indifferents" the iniquity of a small minority of the idle rich, prostituting one of the oldest and most valued legal rights of the people to their own selfish purposes. For manifestly, if they want fast road travelling, let them have it and welcome—just as one may fairly say to the balloonists, "For heaven's sake go and discover the North Pole or anything else that wants discovering, but don't go fooling about among our roofs dragging

off slates and chimney-pots with your grapnels, as is your favourite pastime."

I am entirely in favour of races for motor-maniacs and plenty of them, *upon their own racecourses*. My objection to their habits is not theoretic or academic, it is purely social and legal. The oldest and most primitive right of Englishmen is to enjoy freely without molestation the public highways, where all may pass to and fro on foot or horseback, or on wheels, at such a pace as may not cause danger or annoyance. Horse racing has been always very properly tabooed wherever attempted, upon the same grounds, and yet we are expected to quietly endure the transplantation of the locomotive from the railway track to the people's highway, and what is more, to what is too often the people's children's only playground!

We all remember reading how fifty years ago there were "old fogeys" without number, who publicly and privately opposed the introduction of railways, but I never read that there were any in those days who were selfish, ignorant or impudent enough to promote a bill for running their new-fangled engines upon the King's highway. Yet it has come to this. The more's the pity.

To recapitulate, my indictment is just this. To admit steam carriages to exceed the pace limits of horse traffic is, (1) to confer special rights upon new comers, to the detriment of the old; (2) to seriously mulct, annoy, endanger and damnify users thereof and dwellers near by, and is consequently a gross outrage and an invasion of the civil rights of Englishmen.

Motors increase road rates, they afford a ready weapon for the reckless and ill-disposed, they waste national wealth, they cause millions to be paid to our foreign trade competitors, they father the foreigner at our own expense, they are a real danger to children and deaf old folks, and a curse to people with families living by roadsides. They damage roadside crops and greatly annoy roadside dwellers by their dust and noisome stench. They frighten people at night and young horses at all times with their glare and groans, and finally serve no end, for the most part, but to amuse the idle rich.

If the aggrieved and insulted majority tamely submit to this oppression on the part of the ruling classes, why, then, our ancient British spirit must indeed be broken!

However hopeless it may seem to roll back the tide at this time of day—it may surely be allowable to add that even supposing we English are doomed through the stupidity, or worse, of our representatives in Parliament to have motors, like the poor, always with us, in spite of our land being the only one for which motors are utterly unsuitable and therefore a source of perpetual danger—only a peculiarly stupid people would neglect to use every ordinary means, such as must suggest themselves to every rational being, for abating the evil by minimising danger and securing detection.

Now, everyone knows that our wiseacres have thought fit to place their Numbers precisely where they are usually, when travelling fast, enveloped in a cloud of dust—and consequently invisible. When motors are used for burglary or other illegal acts, as they frequently are, a great coat or shawl thrown over the back of the car effectively conceals identity, and secures complete protection from prying eyes. Clearly then, nothing could be simpler than to compel them to put their numbers upon a high stanchion or support—or if the car be covered—erected on the roof after the manner of roof advertisements.

In the direction of minimising danger from run-over accidents and collisions—obviously, a statute compelling motors to exchange their present bellicose and ramlike form for the more domestic semblance of an india-rubber portable bath-tub or a diver in full costume—by surrounding their wings, forepart and sides, with a padded or inflated rubber fence carried down to the ground, or a semi-circular cow-catcher well lined and padded for catching up dogs and babies and pigs, etc., without injury—much would be done to propitiate public opinion and conciliate opposition. If motorists object to the foregoing obvious remedies for an acknowledged evil, upon the grounds of disfigurement and expense, let me hasten to assure them that nothing can conceivably, in non-motoring eyes, spoil the appearance of the average motor or add to their ugliness—while the cost of reducing motors to comparative harmlessness must be a fleabite when set against the cost entailed upon the County Rates and Police in the vain endeavour to confine their outrages on the public within reasonable limits !



## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE DECLINE OF RESPECT FOR WOMAN

I HAVE in an earlier chapter glanced at the decline of woman's influence from the high respect in which she was once held by our remote Teutonic ancestors in the forests of mid-Europe, but I am tempted once more to return to the theme in order to point out the striking similarity in our modern life with the leading features of the declining days of old Rome.

It is impossible to deny the singular resemblance between our own modern peculiarities and those of pagan Rome in its later days as set down in the pages of its own chroniclers, or in the terrible arraignment of Holy Writ in the mystical language of the Apocalypse. These signs or marks are, first, the growing degradation of woman; secondly, excessive luxury; thirdly, the carrying of productions of their commerce to every part of the world; fourthly, attracting all nations of the earth by her wealth and splendour; and fifthly, the cruelty of her people as mystically foreshadowed in the Book of Revelation by the scarlet woman (which was Babylon) devouring her own flesh, that is, being eaten up by her own children. And if this was true of old Rome which is no more, and of Babylon its prototype before that, is it not surely time to take heed lest we, too, of whom it can be truly said that all nations come and worship before us, shall at last excite the anger of the nations of the earth till the ten horns of the beast (which are ten kingdoms) (who knows, perhaps, our own Colonies?) "shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire"?

We are apt to be deceived by the more important position occupied by woman in these days in the external affairs of life, her more assured position in regard to the control of her own business, and her greater share in the business of life, into the belief that the esteem and regard in which she is held in the England of to-day is greater than that of five hundred years ago. But this is precisely one of the most dangerous fallacies that ever beset the human mind. It is in great measure the retrogression

in our views of woman's purpose, mission, and sphere of action, which causes our women of to-day to seek a desperate channel for their activities and a means of escape from the ills of their position by invading the province of man and competing with him in the unsexing arena of physical labour and public strife. And whence comes this desire on the part of women ? Not certainly of its own accord as the natural prompting of their own breasts ; but as the result of the keen competition for life which animates them in common with all human creatures, and which in an ever-increasing degree through the injustice and falseness of our civilization, tends to deprive millions of women of their means of support and protection, and like the ugly blundering machine which it is, tends more and more to crush out the weakest, and oppress all who are unable to resist its cruel and unequal pressure.

It is this blundering machine which we miscall civilization and progress, this Frankenstein of our own raising, this Juggernaut which, distinguishing neither good nor evil, sparing neither sex nor age, blindly works out the Cosmic forces and wreaks the ill-will of Mammon and Vulcan upon the human race ; while under the ægis of individualism, which flows directly from the teaching of the Reformation, each man and woman deeming themselves authorised to expound the divine revelation in his own fashion, soon tend towards becoming in turn, each one, a religion and a law unto themselves.

There can be no question that the respect for woman which chivalry fostered and raised to its highest limits, was due in a great measure to the special worship accorded to the Virgin Mary by the teachers of the ancient faith. The culture of the Virgin Mary in her three-fold attribute of Virgin, Daughter and Divine Mother, could scarcely fail to impress the youthful mind with a three-fold respect for woman in her triple character, more especially when the lessons conveyed were instilled with the dawn of its earliest years.

The observant traveller can scarcely fail to see this in passing through the various countries of Europe, nor can he fail to perceive that though the name of mother brings endearing associations in all parts of the world, the term acquires a more lofty and more sacred meaning where the Catholic religion has taught the child from its earliest years to venerate in the Virgin Mary the spiritual

mother who guides and protects his footsteps from the cradle to the grave.

Doubtless the lessons of the past, as well as the experience of the present, alike tell us that woman rarely rises beyond her environment, and that degrading passions, public vice, gross abandonment to the pleasures of the table, and the coarse entertainments of a licentious drama, all tend to degrade and drag her down; so that it may be said with truth that woman's position in a country can be accurately determined by the coarseness or refinement of the stage, of the literature, and of the habits of her nation.

Among the Celts, where songs, and romantic if childish melodies, dances, and recitations, have since the dawn of history stirred the people's spirits, as only tales of blood and rough sports can do among our ruder Teuton races, be it Welsh valley, or Highland glen, Briton household or Irish cot, woman always has and still holds a post of supremacy in her three-fold capacity of maid, wife and mother. In spite of what Tacitus tells us of the astonishment of the Romans at the high place occupied by women in the families of the Teutonic race, it is certain that nowadays the respect and esteem and position of woman decreases from the African and Oriental borders to the northernmost limits of Russia, Sweden and Norway, with startling precision and accuracy. Indeed, the degradation and utter contempt of female chastity evinced in the extreme northern peoples and conspicuous among the Swedes and Danes down to the present day is such as hardly can be believed but by those who are intimately acquainted with their domestic habits. If we may trust the memoirs of Mary Wolstenholme, a highly cultivated writer of a century ago, the condition of the Scandinavian races in those days must have been even more deplorable than at present; while not to go too far from home, the proportion of illegitimate births in Scotland exceeds that of any of the Southern or Latin countries, and the songs and literature of Burns, and other popular writers, too plainly attest the, immorality and low esteem in which woman is held, in the land where, to judge by Walter Scott's novels alone, we have ample proofs of their elevation and influence in past ages.

It is difficult in these days to believe that up to the Reformation it was thought unchristian and indelicate in the highest degree

for a woman to earn her bread as in the days of old pagan Rome by acting, to say nothing of displaying her undraped limbs upon the boards of a Christian stage. Think of the distance we have travelled when we read in the daily papers without blinking that certain eccentric and old-fashioned magistrates seem to doubt whether they ought not to interfere to prevent little girls of tender years from being trained up to stage life; or when we are told that thousands are brought to the verge of starvation by pursuing a profession which possesses such overwhelming attractions for the female sex as to draw thither far the largest share of the grace and beauty of the land, while the competition among its members scarcely suffices to procure them a bare subsistence—with the natural result that the stage is, according to the best and most authenticated reports, nothing else but a feeder, or universal provider, of female prostitution.

Think, too, of the degrading spectacles which seem to please more than aught else in these days; of the millions that have been poured into the lap of the fortunate shareholders of the Gaiety, the Alhambra, or the Empire, whose boards have gained a European reputation for exhibitions of female flesh that recall the days of Nero, in the heart of this unchristian city; where costume, if any, serves but to accentuate rather than to conceal the dancers' charms, and which, accurately to describe, would shame even the pen of the most licentious scribbler of this pseudo-artistic age.

Think, too, of the miscalled musical comedies, or to be more exact, the string of ill-written drivel, bearing the title of a "Girl" of some sort or other, as a bait to lure dissolute youth or senile obscenity, each carefully designed to tickle the jaded palates of luxurious sensualists by dances, songs and dialogues, which, while wholly unredeemed by any tincture of wit, or sequence, are at one in debasing woman to a standard worse than Pagan.

Think, too, of the Circuses where little children, by whip and strap, are painfully trained by cruel teachers worse than the lanistae of Pagan days, to writhe and torture themselves into reptile-like designs as if to defy and insult their Maker by parodying His beautiful designs, "to make a Briton's Holiday"—or borrowing from heathen Africans their lascivious dances—young girls of tender age, white slaves of the United States,

intersperse their "coon songs" with strange contortions which share the popular applause with tender maidens of our own rearing, similarly trained to divest themselves of every trace of modesty under the lying pretence of Art.

Think, too, of the deluge of noisome stories which flood the land in newspaper, novel or magazine, the greater number of which deface and defile the image of woman, portraying her, and, alas! too often by a woman's hand, as something worse than beast and little less than devil.

Think, too, of the example of the London season's flesh market, with its noisy, blatant, chaffering crowd, each pressing their virgin wares upon reluctant bachelors like hawkers in Billingsgate or City Road.

Well might those who are still uncorrupted enough to revolt at the sight of the universal debasement of woman which meets the eye in every novel, play, or magazine or comic paper, or strikes the eye on every stage and in every ball-room, exclaim in the words of Shakespeare, "Under which king, Bezonian?" "Do we worship Christ or Diana?"

Nor is the rage for female exhibitions of risk and daring and all unfeminine sports and displays by any means decreasing. On the contrary. Since when first, as a boy, I joined with many others in a memorial to the late Queen to use her influence to abate the growing passion for display of feats of female daring and endurance which filled the circuses and theatres to overflowing, resulting frequently in sad catastrophes, I have carefully noted the waning influence of her womanly protest on behalf of her degraded sex, and year by year, a steady increase in the tendency to produce "startling novelties," as they are well named, in which the human mind is racked to devise some new stress or strain to put upon these helpless slaves of the boards or the arena. Children sold to remorseless villains, by demons in the shape of mothers, doomed to daily torture from their very infancy under the cruel discipline which supplees their limbs and steadies their nerves, goaded by the whip to feats of daring and agility that they may fatten the slave drivers who own them, still fill our ever-growing hippodromes and circuses and delight our people as of yore. Fortunately, indeed, it is that the law, bad as it is, places at least some limit to the showman's

power, or we should certainly see boys and girls of tender age as ruthlessly murdered upon the stage or circus, amid popular shouts, as in the worst days of old Rome, and hear once more the voice of Cant assuring us through the pen of the paid critic that "it is all done wholly in the purest interest of Art."

It is frequently a matter of wonder whether our self-deception and insincerity, twin daughters of cant, are really so overpowering with us as completely to obscure the light of truth. Or are we merely so ready to hearken to the voice of the serpent just because it flatters our own base inclinations? Let a matron in magazine or newspaper but deplore the growing tendency to undrape our women in private as well as in public, she is surely told that she is devoid of artistic sensibility and preception; or if she complains that she dare not take her children to play, entertainment or picture show, lest their ears or eyes be defiled by revolting spectacles or loathsome dialogues, once more she is put to flight by the imputation of being old-fashioned or out-of-date. Let but a man of taste and culture in private intercourse or public press express his regret that no better use can be found in these days for a young and lovely woman than to hang head downwards from a trapèze by her toes, with a fat man hanging from a strap between her teeth, or say he fails to see the merit of a "split" or "head over heels" as an adjunct to a domestic ballad in a musical comedy, he will most assuredly meet with critics who are not ashamed of invoking the name of Art in defence of such monstrosities. Truly, in these days, one might exclaim, paraphrasing the words of Mme. Roland on the scaffold, "Oh, Art, what crimes are done in thy name."

#### GALLANTRY.

In an earlier chapter I have adverted to the lack of politeness which, in the opinion of nearly all foreigners, sets up a barrier between ourselves and our European neighbours. It is not infrequently urged, more especially by the fair sex, who are painfully sensitive to any reflections upon this head, that we British are superior to the men and women of other countries, if not in the lighter graces, at any rate in the principal essentials of politeness and civilisation. How often it has been said in deprecation that if we have not quite so much French polish

as our neighbours we largely display that amiability and good nature which is, or should be, the basis of all true social politeness. There is surely more sincerity on our side, the ladies declare, if less polish; less compliments, but more truth; less show, but more substance; less pretence, but more reality. To a certain extent this is undeniably true, though in this, as in many other human things, it is precisely upon the exterior signs, not the real motives, that judgment is too frequently passed. Just as we judge the foaming tankard by its froth, so we are all too apt to mistake appearances for realities, and outward signs for inward merit. It has been said, no doubt with much truth, that a well-varnished boot has often secured the affections of a desirable heiress, and there are few who have never heard of the story of the old lady who left a colossal fortune to the young gentleman who had once helped her into her carriage in a moment of difficulty. It is, however, vain to argue that even in England, where we pride ourselves upon our straightforwardness and sensible disregard of external show, that we are therefore "to lay the flattering unction to our souls" that we alone of all nations are totally exempt from the weaknesses and follies to which the entire human race is liable. Is not all this, in great measure, mere talk, mere special pleading? in short, an attempt to cloak our vice of rudeness and bluntness under a pretended veil of honesty and sincerity? And even if it were true, we only push the problem a little further off; for surely it must be admitted on all hands that there is nothing that tends to oil the wheels of Society more pleasantly, and, in short, to perform all the essential services of good will and charity, as to cultivate that sympathy and condescension to others which we are fain, however unwillingly, to admire in those who possess them.

But if further argument were wanting, I cannot do better than adopt the thoroughly John Bull method of proving the pudding by the eating. Let us for a moment dive deeper beneath the surface, and consider whether we have not widely departed and are still widely departing from our own ancient standard of true gallantry, to the absence of which we so often take exception in our Gallic neighbours, conceiving our own more substantial views of chivalry to be infinitely preferable

to theirs. Our proudest boast has always been that in common with the other branches of the great Germanic family, we have consistently shared in that proud distinction which excited the admiration of the Roman historian in the days of the early Cæsars, namely, their high respect for the weaker sex and the honourable place which they accorded to woman in the social commonwealth.

Can it still be said that we are faithful to our ancient pledges and traditions, or that "our vows are little more than words," when we look more closely into the conditions of Society, the pregnant tales of the Stage, the Tribunal, and the Press which slowly but surely unroll before our eyes the story of the rise and fall of woman's empire in the land? It is true that of late years woman has at last been reinstated in that power and independence and control of her own property, which had been conceded even to Oriental women, whom we affect to despise, so long as fourteen centuries ago. In all other essential points I do not hesitate to say that woman has fallen sadly "from her high estate." Nor is it doubtful that she has herself largely contributed to such a result, partly by injudicious condescension and indulgence to the weaknesses and sensual inclinations of her male belongings, but still more through the persistent depreciation and revilings of their own sex by the traitress scribbling sisterhood who are answerable for two-thirds of our current literature; to which must be added the ever-growing contempt engendered in the youth of the land at its most impressionable time of life by the corrupt Drama, the Music-hall, the Circus, and the Comic Literature of the day.

I have already adverted in another place to the prominent part taken by the Prince of Wales, now Edward VII., in contributing largely to this result in the upper classes of the social strata, just as his venerated mother brought her powerful influence to bear upon all that tended to refine, to elevate, and to widen the sphere of woman's usefulness. Having, however, in its place considered at some length the causes which have tended to destroy our ancient ideal of gallantry and chivalrous respect to woman, I will here confine myself to the theme in so far as it relates to the treatment of woman when she appears at the Bar of Justice, either as a suitor, a witness, or a litigant.



I have frequently assisted as a witness and spectator at the Courts of Justice at Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Florence, Naples, and Vienna, and I can safely say that in the very few times that I have been compulsorily present in our own Courts of Justice and Police Courts, I have seen more instances of callous indifference, cynical jocularities, and public as well as private disrespect towards female witnesses and litigants than I have ever seen collectively in the whole of the rest of Europe.

Whether this state of things is mainly to be attributed to the depraving and hardening influence of daily contact with vice and deceit in all its forms, or original blackguardism on the part of the English Bar, it is not easy to determine, but I can boldly attest that, from instances derived as a personal eye-witness as well as from the evidence of newspaper reports, the fate of the woman who appears either as a witness or a litigant in an English Court of Justice is more unenviable, and her rights, good name, and self-respect are more at the mercy of a callous and brutal cross-examining barrister, and is less likely to be protected by the presiding judge from the insults to which she may be subject, than in any Court of Justice in Europe.

Nor is it only that insult and reckless outrage to person and good name is too frequently the lot of the girl or woman whose chivalry or generosity too frequently tempts her to take the part of the oppressed, or avenge the innocent, in a Court of Justice, but even the more substantial benefits of Law to which she is nominally entitled are practically denied her in a degree which is unknown upon the Continent, where her sex and weakness invariably entitle her to higher consideration and place her in a more favoured position than the members of the opposite sex.

It must also be set down to the credit side of the balance in favour of the United States that, whether from dislike of her ancient oppressors or from general antipathy to British public opinion, our trans-Atlantic cousins carry that respect for women which has made them notorious in every land, to even a higher pitch than any nation of the Continent, in spite of, or possibly because of, the older Civilisation of the latter. As an instance of this, the disinclination to hang women for serious offences is so marked in America that the extreme penalty of the Law has almost ceased to exist in regard to women. Indeed the Champions of

women's rights carry their passion for equality with men so far that they are said to meditate a strong and united representation in order to set themselves right in this respect and prove their fitness for equal rights, by insisting upon sharing the privilege of the scaffold with the coarser sex !

In France the woman who has any cause of jealousy, or for whom love or passion can be pleaded in any degree, is almost sure to gain her cause. It is reserved for England alone to pride itself upon its stoical disregard to women's tears and women's smiles, and to carry its Puritanic insensibility to her weakness and her charms to the extent of turning her fears and sorrows into ridicule in Law Court and Press, and denying her even that bare meed of Justice to which her fellow-men are indefeasibly entitled.

Coming down gradually to the concrete instance which I have selected at hazard from the pages of the daily papers, it will be seen that whereas in France and America, Italy and Spain, and in a less degree perhaps in Germany, the betrayed or ill-treated maiden—who generously if recklessly bestows the treasure of her love upon an unworthy object, and deserted, abandoned, perhaps scoffed by her deceiver, turns to the tribunals of her country for relief, or, maddened with pain and shame, destroys the child that her lover refuses to own or support—more surely obtains the sympathy of a compassionate judge or jury in any other civilised land than our own.

In the case I have here before me of a murderous attack upon a girl by a British sailor, it is scarcely possible to present the Law in a more revolting aspect to the eyes of (I trust) a disgusted public, and if no other argument were found against a free Press, every right-minded person must admit that no more powerful plea could be advanced for the control and due bridling of its omnipotence than such a galaxy of anti-judicial circumstances as are here portrayed, or a more powerful indictment framed against what we please to call our up-to-date civilisation.

We have a halfpenny paper's word for the damning fact that an English judge—to be sure the youngest on the Bench—if that is any excuse for one who so greatly prefers his reputation as a wit to his own self-respect and, what is far more to the

purpose, to the credit of the public Law of which he is a dispenser—is unable to resist a childish joke, more fitted for the pot-house than the Forum, when trying a crime which, by the common consent of all civilised nations, is the most dastardly and unmanly of which the most debased humanity can possibly be guilty; in the second place, be it noted that the cowardly assailant, who seems to have been a stoker on a man-of-war, could invent no better defence than that he was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing when he threw vitriol in the face of a girl to whom he had been formerly engaged, but who refused to marry him on account of the information which she had received about his antecedents; in the third place, “*pour encourager les autres,*” this “Ornament of the English Bench” in his wisdom thought fit to restore this “Ornament of the Navy” to his shipmates with a light-hearted joke, for no better reason, as far as could be divined, than that his *drunken condition prevented him from succeeding in his atrocious design!* Though it must be avowed that this three-fold scandal was only flaunted in the public eye by newspapers whose glaring indiscretions and wholesale contempt for common decency and reverence have gained them a profitable if shameful notoriety, it is deplorable to consider the harm that may result from the lesson thus afforded to a community whose rapidly waning respect for women, and whose ever-growing list of dastardly crimes by disappointed lovers, which in years past were almost unknown except among the Celtic inhabitants of Southern nations, point too surely to British deterioration and the decline of British gallantry.

It is impossible to close this chapter without adverting to the alarming daily proofs of our growing conformity—or shall I say declension?—to a familiar type of Roman degeneracy which until lately was almost unknown in England. The constant resort to secret assaults—secret assassination—and murderous attacks upon unarmed men—and, in respect of women, the frequent recurrence of dastardly onslaughts upon girls by their rejected lovers—points to a marked increase of cowardly brutality—by no means confined, as abroad, to the dregs of the people—which speaks volumes for the decline of gallantry and fair play, which were once our most cherished characteristics.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### OUR COUNTRY BOYS AND GIRLS

CLOSELY connected with the decline of home life is the subject of modern servants. This is a question which, like the poor, is always with us, and which powerfully influences the closely allied question of home *versus* hotel life, which is so striking and painful a characteristic of our modern ways.

Our new-born craze for Education, which we share in common with all the European nations, has much to answer for. It reminds one of Lamb's silly if wide-read libel upon the Chinese nation, in which he asserts that that practical and highly intelligent people, having discovered, through the burning down of a hut in which a pig was kept, that roast pig was an excellent dish, all the neighbours at once, allured by the delightful odour, set their houses on fire in order to procure a similar delicacy.

In common with the rest of the European concert (probably so named on account of its resemblance to a German band, where every man plays a tune on his own instrument) we are apparently expected to set fire to our houses, or in other words attempt to fill up every unfortunate child in the public elementary schools who falls into our hands with as much knowledge as he can possibly hold to his own destruction and the dislocation of the entire social system, in order that one per cent. or less may become a genius. For the only perceptible effect of School Board Education seems to be to gain a smattering of every branch of knowledge coupled with a vast amount of conceit, to exchange reasoning powers for "cocksuredness," and a natural desire for acquisition of information for a settled conviction that there is nothing more to be learnt after leaving school. The deadening effect on the mind of the children of the poorer classes, especially in agricultural districts, is a subject of remark by all observers. It would seem that the brains of their forefathers, having been left comparatively fallow and unused to high pressure, when subjected to the unnatural forcing which must necessarily accompany the attempt to put a quart into a pint

pot, tends rather to obfuscate and depress their intelligence to a lower standard than that reached by their predecessors.

The universal opinion in country districts points in the direction of a complete reform of existing methods. All are alike dissatisfied with the observed results. The farmer can get no lads to take interest in their work, the farmer's wife no maids to help her in her daily duties; the dairy maid is a thing of the past. The boys have their imagination filled with stories of rapid fortunes and the joys of town life, and care no more for the rustic pleasures and merry-makings and Christmas games which delighted their forefathers. They sigh for the gas-lit streets, and are lured away to the cities by the garish pleasures, the bright posters which announce untold delights, the well-lit streets with their bright shops to beguile the evening hours, the music-halls and theatres of which they dream and read in penny novelettes, telling them of a fairy-land of hopes and pleasures, which a country life seems unable to bestow. The girls, on the other hand, spurn the tame pleasures of the poultry-yard and the calm if unexciting daily routine of country life, after having once tasted of the joys of the town with the gay shops which to their childish gaze seem a glimpse of Paradise, and, like their brothers, inspired with the modern craving, greatly aggravated by cheap literature, of a short cut to fortune, begin to loathe the monotonous if peaceful round of labour in their cottage or farm homes and seek a freedom, which is denied them by the stricter customs and discipline of the country, in the noisy workshops and bright stores glittering with seductive objects which have left an effaceable image upon their youthful imagination. Thus the great Babylon, like a huge wen, absorbs the fresh young blood of the country through a thousand veins, that they may struggle for bare life and ever-sinking wages with the denizens of the town, finding too often a grave for their hopes, their health and their expectations, in the muddy streets whose glittering gaslights yearly attract so many silly moths to self-immolation.

Undoubtedly the sights presented by the streets of our principal cities before the education era was one that no lover of humanity can recall without a blush. The School Board has, if not in education, at least effected a magnificent reform in clearing London streets of its "arabs" of both sexes, and in presenting

to the children of the poor a higher standard of cleanliness, order and decency, has brought happiness to many homes.

It is to be feared, however, that the direct and specific effects of the system adopted in the public elementary schools has tended rather to prove a stumbling-block and impediment than an aid to the better and fuller comprehension of the duties of life. Better far to train children of the labouring classes in the country, after brief instruction in the mysteries of reading, writing and arithmetic, to fitly understand and appreciate the beauties and benefits of an agricultural life, by interesting them in the history of domestic animals, by teaching them the names and qualities of flowers and useful plants of which Providence has been so bountiful and in which every country district abounds, inciting them by gifts and encouragement to till to the best advantage, and observe the growth of the plants and fruits and flowers in a plot of land attached to the school, in order to develop in the youthful mind at its most susceptible age the love and interest in God's benefits which cannot fail to attach them to a country life and country objects, and so serve as an antidote to the excitements of modern life and the incentives of modern literature. Instead of this, their brains are congested with crude facts of geography or history, which are no sooner learnt by heart than destined to be replaced by the cheap novel or the trashy newspaper, temptingly presented with an attractive cover and pictures to catch the eye and enchain the fancy.

Every care should be taken to provide a number of counter attractions within the reach of young children, which, while entertaining and written in a lively style, should convey the higher lessons of morality and the foundations of truer aims by inculcating a love for country life and country matters, an affection for domestic animals, and interest in the beautiful works of Nature and the marvels of plant life, and thus reveal to them the hidden secrets of Nature's realm. No fairy tale can enthrall a child's mind more usefully than the life story and habits of the commonest country denizens—the ant, the bee, the mouse, the flowers, with each their life story, cause of existence, and benefit to man—all such would arouse in the budding mind of the child, if imparted at an early date,

as much and even more delight and interest than the most exciting of novels or the most entrancing of romances. The Scriptures say that men ask for bread and we give them a stone! Surely this is the way we treat our children. When their little minds crave for truth our practice is invariably to fill them with lies. The first stories placed in their hands are falsehoods about giants and dragons of the most primitive type. This is nothing but direct demoralisation of the intellect, it is the process of feeding children with gin or brandy—a moral dram-drinking, which makes simple things and simple ideas no longer pleasing, because their minds have been already debauched by unnatural and exaggerated expectations.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE DECLINE OF HOME LIFE

Few things surprise the foreigner who visits our shores more than the easy desecration of our homes and the contempt of home life which strikes him at every turn. If there is one thing that even the most dissipated Frenchman respects, reveres, nay, almost venerates, it is "le logis," "le chez soi." To him the sanctity of family life, the love of the home of his parents, or his own if married, however humble it be, resembles the respectful awe felt for Sanctuary in olden days. Whatever his conduct, however reprehensible his life, it is rare, even with the most debauched and corrupt, that there remains not in his heart some sense of the sanctity of home; and scarcely ever do the police courts or newspapers abroad reveal such appalling incidents of brutality to wives and children, such cynical debauchery in the inner domestic circle, such open disregard of what is due to wife, children and parents, or such scenes of drunken bestiality, as in England form the staple of police intelligence, and furnish the choicest gems of daily popular literature.

Not only Frenchmen, but all Continentals, however little English they know, have surely heard, if only through the beautiful ballad "Home, Sweet Home," that English men and women are of all others most domestic in their habits, and above all nations attached to the sentiment of home life. If it is painful to be forced to confess that the romance of home life and home associations, and all that is connected with it, is rapidly passing away from amongst us, not a little aided by our new-found attachment to trans-Atlantic ways, it is even more humiliating to feel that perhaps, after all, our reputation for attachment to home life is mainly attributable to that touching and simple melody.

Searching our literature of the past for the story of home and home life and its credentials, so far as can be gathered from popular literature and drama, I have come to the conclusion, however crushing a blow my national self-love may sustain, that



whatever title we have, or ever did possess to special distinction in this direction, is either of exotic origin in accordance with the passing fashion of the day, or attributable to the universal popularity of the beautiful melody afore-mentioned. It seems to have appeared for the first time as the pale reflection of the sober and blameless life of the third of our German kings and his dull but harmless consort, which slowly but surely, among a people who are above all apt to imitate the example of those above them, weaned the masses of the people from the outdoor life and grosser delights of the tavern and ale house, and the still more licentious pleasures of Ranelagh and Vauxhall, to the more decent if monotonous festivities of their own homes, where one would suppose the customary bottle or two of claret or strong port per head, could scarcely have conduced greatly to the harmony of the domestic circle.

The next two reigns represent the natural recoil from the uncongenial decorousness which, to a certain extent compulsory, at least in Court circles, during the respectable reign of George III., was vigorously made amends for by the collapse of all order, sobriety and decency during the Regency; while with the rise of the Byronic school of sentiment and the romantic novels of Walpole, Lewis, Mrs. Rateliff, and Beckford—where dissoluteness was openly glorified, and tales of midnight murder, abductions and adultery were the order of the day—all sentiment of home or home life seems to have utterly departed, until, like a Phoenix from its ashes, virtue once more became fashionable under the benign and peaceful reign of Queen Victoria and her consort, whose blameless lives and incomparable zeal for all that was loftiest and most ennobling in the national life furnished an example which could scarcely fail to secure respect, if not qualified imitation, among their subjects. It is a singular fact that scarcely had "Albert the Good" been taken prematurely from our midst when the reaction, powerfully aided by a pleasure-loving prince and the retirement from social life of his distracted Queen-Mother, set in the opposite direction with an intensity which left little doubt as to the inclinations of at least the upper classes of society. Thereafter that home life which, though we certainly imported no shining examples with our first three foreign sovereigns, is perhaps the only boon we can credit to

Germany as a set-off against Hanoverian domination, has become even more unfashionable than it was in the riotous days of Charles II. Year by year fresh encroachments are devised and fresh insults cast upon Wife, Family, Marriage, and all that goes to make home life sacred and respected; while ribald jokes upon these themes which serve to "tickle the ears of the groundlings without, alas! making the judicious grieve," in entertainments which I dare not call plays, serve to satisfy such dramatic yearnings as are left to our Corinthians after a luxurious dinner at the Carlton or Clarendon. On the other hand, the divorce courts and police news tell too plainly the result of the latter-day reversion to tavern life and outdoor dissipation, which takes us back in memory to the worst days of the Regency, to Paul's Walk and the Ranelagh and Tunbridge Wells in Queen Anne's time, or Whitehall and the Savoy in the shameful days of the Restoration.

#### THE IDLE RICH ON THE DOWN GRADE.

Just as Pepys in his diary marvels that my Lady Castlemaine and the Duchess of Cleveland should be so lost to shame as to take pleasure to parade their charms with dishevelled hair and bare bosom before the rabble of Whitehall, or of the playhouse, and tennis courts, so in our days women of the highest rank, not satisfied with the more restricted audience of their friends at home, prefer to display their naked busts in the stalls of a playhouse or music-hall after a dinner at the Savoy or Cecil, reserving their gayest dresses and brightest jewels to win the approbation of the vulgar, and, if possible, secure what is dearer still to the feminine heart, a flattering paragraph in the penny papers.

That in the United States the new-fledged millionaire, who has risen from the mud by the discovery of rock oil or the successful packing of bacon, should feel that his dollars are wasted unless his expenditure is duly recorded in the current press is scarcely to be wondered at, but that English men and women with the tradition of centuries of good breeding and gentle nurture behind them should prefer the glare of the gaslight and the glitter and the noise of the public hall, with its accompanying notoriety, to the refined society of an elegant home, can only be explained by the collective deterioration of the upper classes through contact with the Tribes of Israel—generally made in Germany—whom

the King especially delights to honour, or with other moneyed vulgarians from every clime who, by their lavish if barbaric profusion, find no difficulty in securing for their entertainments a select assortment of English noblemen and German princes. Here, as elsewhere, Royalty goes far to abet this state of things, and unconsciously contributes to its own downfall and discredit, by patronising not so much what is most respectable, but what is most luxurious, novel, lavish, and ostentatious. Hence in London, as in Paris in the worst days of the Empire, it is well known that it is only necessary to dip deeply into one's purse and scatter royally to secure royal patronage, with the result that the smiles of royalty are in these days of agricultural decay denied to the greater number of the English aristocracy, and have become the habitual appanage of the brewer, the banker, the Jew, and the "rastaquouaire."

It is noteworthy that Grosvenor and Belgrave Squares, Park Lane, and all the choicest sites in Mayfair are rapidly becoming the inheritance of the children of Israel. Ere long the Ghetto of the future will be the east end of Hyde Park, and the time is not far distant when Uncle Sam, who knows better than any other how to bring his pigs to a good market, continuing the conquest of social, as he has already that of commercial London, will abandon Paris in order to complete the social regeneration of his effete relatives on this side of the Atlantic !

No doubt the absence of servants sufficiently trained to satisfy the requirements of civilized hosts causes families of distinction in the "States" to abandon their houses and live in hotels or flats, where they can obtain their meals with greater despatch and comfort than would be possible in their own houses; and it is not unlikely that in England as well, a contributing cause towards the abandonment of home in exchange for the more garish enjoyments of restaurants, is partly referrible to the same cause. Both proceed from the same root-evil—injudicious education of the masses, who, in the public elementary schools, learn just enough to despise work and to regard domestic service in the light of a degradation, thus reducing the supply of intelligent domestic servants, and inducing a corresponding congestion of the lighter and more genteel professions. This evil or deficiency, according as it is viewed, is far more pressing and

conspicuous in the United States, where the greater room for expansion and higher wages obtainable in other ways, relegate domestic service almost exclusively to the poorest German, Irish, and Negro population. In England it is not the quantity so much as the quality which is becoming yearly more deficient; and it can scarcely be denied that the decline of quality or capacity in the domestic servant of to-day is largely attributable to the mistress of the period, who, ignorant and untrained herself in domestic duties, and distracted by the all-pervading passion for gaiety, diversion, and general unrest, is wholly unable, or, if able, unfitted, to bestow time or thought on those domestic duties which she despises and abhors.

Again, by reason of the passion for continual change of residence, and for gadding about from place to place, tempted by railway facilities or specious advertisements, or it may be pricked on by that neurosis which is the bane of our generation, it can scarcely be expected that the modern servant, even if he would, should form a strong attachment to masters or mistresses who possibly twice a year break up their establishment, and at best, offer to advertise for a temporary place for him during a trip to Monte Carlo or a German watering-place.

In my younger days it was only the Scotch nobleman of large but unremunerative estate who showed himself ever ready to let his highland castle or lowland home to the first southerner whose proffered "bawbees" proved too strong a temptation for his dignity. But, alas, nowadays "nous avons changé tout cela," your modern Yankee of much dollars and small refinement delights in bribing an English duke to part with his most treasured residence for a term of years by the pertinacious application of that golden key which in these days of greed and luxury few, if any, profess to withstand.

Indeed, so well known is the greed for pelf which pervades every class, from the highest to the lowest, that I have heard an American millionaire openly boast that he would pick his residence in London wherever he chose from among the finest homes of our proudest aristocracy, provided he had ten minutes' conversation with the owner and was prepared to furnish the necessary cash inducement!

All this fills the Frenchman with horror and disgust. Nothing

shocks the Continental observer, and the Frenchman in particular, more painfully than our glaring want of respect for the sacredness of home. It strikes him at every step, meets his eye in every advertisement, and impresses him in every coterie. One may safely say during a London season that if the conversation does not turn upon the last entertainment or the next to come, the topic must surely be the last house change of Mr. A. or Lady C., with appropriate comments as to his or her solvency or talent for making ends meet, or "raising the wind" as the occasion seems to require. Nor are the country folk behind their town neighbours. It would scarcely be an offence nowadays to drive up to the seat of a county magnate and ask him what he will take for his house, servants, carriages, horses, and all—as a "going concern"—and that it is daily done by Jews and millionaires of all sorts, or their agents, is a matter of common knowledge, however studiously the secret be kept, lest prices should suffer in consequence. As for delicacy or refinement entering into the matter, in imitation of our trans-Atlantic cousins, we have long since outgrown all such puerile and old-world fantasies. For have we, indeed, any real home in these days of continual gaiety and perpetual movement? Your smart up-to-date family with pretensions to fashion scarcely ever spend a fortnight in one place, and, indeed, when they say they are at home it only means that they sleep there, and after "putting in an appearance at some fellow's place" (in the detestable slang of the day) forty miles out of town by means of a motor car, finishing up with a dinner party at the Hotel Cecil and a night at the theatre and so on, it can hardly be said—what with the demands of country fêtes and town dissipations to boot which motors enable its votaries successively to achieve—that there is any wide margin left for the enjoyment of "Home, Sweet Home."

There is yet an aspect of this question which throws a still more lurid light upon our modern ways, and marks still more clearly the downward path of social England.

Insincerity (which, be it noted, is the equivalent of Cant in action, as I have repeated *ad nauseam*), is not only a source of just reproach on the part of foreigners, but I fear is all too deeply ingrained in our national life to admit of doubt or denial.

Here once more the cloven foot of cant and insincerity peeps out, which so powerfully contributes to the undoing of that love of home, whose perfume and sentiment still lingers faintly in our midst. For how is it likely we should be so desirous of letting our friends into our home secrets or of enabling them to gauge the secrets of our prison-house, when our conscious if unavowed aim in life is to act a part, to deceive our friends and the world at large as to our real condition, and, in short, appear to be what we are not ?

“*Esse quam videri*” was the grand old rule of two thousand years ago, but the motto of to-day is “*Videri quam esse*” (to seem rather than to be). We might go further, and say that in these days all that is wanted is to seem. For in a land where imposture is rampant from peer to peasant, where hundreds of peers, and dukes, too, are not ashamed to don false names, false titles, and strut in borrowed plumes—is it wonderful that *seeming* is all that is held necessary to achieve, while only fools trouble their heads about *being* ? In the light of these undoubted facts can we marvel that your counter-jumper, when he drops the yard measure on early-closing days and spends the rest of his day in the character of a gentleman at large, in clothes undistinguishable from a duke's, should prefer when on hospitable thoughts intent to entertain his brother impostors, all dukes for the nonce, at a restaurant, in preference to the garret on a fourth floor which he hires in Pimlico ; still less, when he has succeeded in beguiling other youths more foolish than himself into the belief that he really is what he seems, would he risk, by taking them to his humble home, to stand confessed the scion of a poor if respectable charwoman.

Nor can we reproach Mary Ann, who, by virtue of her good looks and skill in external adornment, simulates with astonishing accuracy the airs and graces of a fashionable beauty until she opens her mouth to speak, if she prefers to saunter through the park or accept refreshment at a “*café*” from the youth whom she fascinates by her attractions, in preference to the risk of a sudden death to her romance through the disenchanting avowal that her home is in Soho, where her mother takes in washing for a living. Nor can we wonder if the lawyer's clerk or dressmaker's apprentice, who through a chance meeting at Scarborough or

Margate, have realised in the sweet moments of secret intercourse the thrilling raptures of the titled lovers of their favourite novels—who through various vicissitudes, and similar adventures to their own, have arrived at the haven of a wealthy marriage—should look forward to a repetition of the same experience in private life! This and the like is what turns our lives into a lie and a fraud, and stains our whole being with the hue of insincerity. But there are yet two potent causes flowing from the above, at any rate in lower life, which tend even more directly to weaken our home, and through home our national life. I allude to drinking and bad cooking, two closely linked and fruitful causes of home decay.

#### DRINK BELOW STAIRS.

The frequenting of public-houses by men of the lower classes is nothing more than the correlative of “club-and-restaurant-going” among the upper classes. Their causes are identical, and their effects equally ruinous to the nation. The poor man is driven out of his home too often by the bad management of his wife—an ill-regulated household—and a bad dinner; the rich man’s home goes to the dogs because his wife is hardly ever there.

We hear a great deal of drunkenness in this country, indeed parsons and statesmen seem to belabour this theme as if it lay at the root of our national decay. Closer examination would show this to be a complete fallacy. That we were a hundred and fifty years ago, up to, perhaps, fifty years ago, the most drunken race that ever the world saw, is only to say that our degradation had reached its lowest depth in the earlier half of that period: but one must be blind not to see the enormous improvement that has taken place in this respect, and one for which we were largely indebted to the youthful efforts of Queen Victoria and her royal Consort, who purged the Court, and, by a gradual process of infiltration, society at large, of its most unpleasant failing.

Perhaps the most powerful agent in procuring this wholesome reformation, is that imitation of those above them which is so marked an English characteristic. So soon as it became a disgrace to be seen the worse for liquor among the upper classes, and the common phrase “drunk as a lord” had ceased to have any meaning, the gradual progress of sobriety became only a matter of time; and I can answer from personal observation

that the progress in that direction, during the last thirty years, leaves little doubt but that without any resort to legal compulsion England will eventually free herself from what was once a world-wide reproach.

#### DRINK ABOVE STAIRS.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the disruption of home-life, caused by our mistaken education of women, or the effect of a little knowledge upon ill-regulated minds, has combined with the ever-increasing distaste for home and the restlessness of the leisured classes to exert so powerful an influence for evil upon the classes who imitate their example, that a recrudescence of drink is greatly to be feared in the near future. Already, if we may trust the newspaper correspondents and the warning cries of the clergy and the medical profession, the-old time public inebriety of all classes is now exchanged for an equally dangerous over-indulgence which stops just short of intoxication among the higher classes, and in both upper and middle classes (the latter more particularly) a very marked rate of increase in female inebriety, which is not likely to decrease in these days of feminine-club, flat and hotel life, where, as is well understood in America, the opportunities of over-indulgence are plentifully afforded.

It must not be imagined that the same causes always operate in producing the same results. The growing mania for the organisation of more or less useful societies, choral, artistic, musical, æsthetic, philanthropic and religious, and the growing pride and ambition for public life to which woman has been recently admitted, conspires with an imperfect education destined rather for show than use, to urge the English lady of to-day to desire distinction in the public arena rather than that of the domestic household. Is it, then, surprising that the old-world mysteries of housekeeping, the treasured recipes of the dispensary and the kitchen have no longer charms for a generation, who, if they cannot achieve newspaper fame by the brightness of their eyes or the brilliancy of their diamonds, must needs seek reputation in golf or hockey competition, or, if æsthetically inclined, aspire to the distinction of a novelist, a playwright, a paintress or an amateur actress? As it is with the higher



ranks, so it is with the middle. Only the residuum, or in other words those who neither have the inclination nor the talent for outstripping their fair competitors, are left to keep up the old traditions of an English home, with the painful but natural result that these latter are regarded by their more flamboyant sisters as "poor things" devoid of spirit or energy, precisely as in a lower sphere the stronger and abler girls betake themselves to the drapery counter and the public services as clerks, typists or waitresses, rather than stoop to the discredited duties of domestic service. It has been well said that a nation gets the laws which it deserves. So it may be said with truth of the ladies of England that they get the servants they deserve. It is no wonder, when mistresses think so lightly of their homes as to hire them to the first comer for pelf, and betray their entire ignorance of the simplest domestic duty and their complete unconcern for the safety and comfort of their husbands and families—snatching eagerly at any chance of passing amusement, a trip to Italy or a month at Homburg, as a welcome interruption to the hateful monotony of a distasteful home life—if her household are infected with the same spirit and in their turn think lightly of the cares and responsibilities which they observe their mistress ever willing to slur over and avoid. Again, how can one expect that the working-man's wife shall be impressed with the necessity of economy, order, cleanliness and culinary skill when she finds the same neglect, contempt and indifference in those to whom she looks for guidance and counsel?

When I referred above to Ignorance as the root and cause of this falling off, I say, advisedly, that in the light of modern science, that is according to the clearest teachings of experience and reason, every man of sense must now regard culinary science in its widest sense, as well as in the general treatment of the human subject in health or disease, as being the highest and noblest duty that a woman is destined to fulfil: since a child, that is a man in embryo, that is, our future race, is confessedly made or marred by his food and surroundings, and a full-grown man's ability and capacity is modified in the highest degree by the quality of the sustenance he receives. Consequently it follows that no higher duty or more sacred trust can be placed upon the shoulders of a Christian who desires to fit herself for a due

performance of her obligations as a wife and mother, than to excel in every detail of domestic economy. Here we might do well to take a leaf from the books of our German distant relatives. If the sense of Religion is stronger with us than with them and its coercive force superior, assuredly Duty amongst the northern nations is as conspicuous as its absence amongst ourselves. With German women it is not a question of whether cooking spoils the face or hands or roughens the complexion or whether it is more amusing to paint a fan or embroider a handkerchief than to draw out a bill of fare. In vain would they plead that it is more fashionable to pay a housekeeper to attend to matters for which the lady of the house must alone be responsible, or that it is more comfortable to shirk housekeeping cares for good and all, by contracting with the neighbouring cook-shop or restaurant ! These and other sophisms would fade away from amongst us were Duty firmly impressed by the early discipline of youth. It was Duty which broke the serried ranks of the fiery Gaul at Sedan and Gravelotte, it is still Duty which causes the German clerk from Panama to Shanghai to live frugally and work earnestly, while his English rival dreams of cricket or polo ; and if England in the decrees of an All-wise Providence is fated to succumb to her Teutonic rival in the race of commerce, it will not be Free Trade so much as an incomplete sense of Duty which shall have caused her downfall.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### COOKERY

OUR national cooking stands forth like a beacon to impress upon the minds of the entire world the lesson that I have so often attempted in these pages to bring home to my readers. Other nations there are who do worse than ourselves in many ways, and in many spheres of action, but we alone take pride in what we should be deeply ashamed of. They, at least when convinced of their errors, strive to mend them, but it is reserved for Britons alone, probably because they "never, never, never, will be slaves," to tell each other repeatedly how defective is their system of Law, how illogical their Church and Constitution, how chaotic their form of Government, and how hopeless their national Cooking, without ever lifting a finger to find a cure or even propose a remedy.

As usual, our stupid nation falls naturally into several classes in dealing with such questions. The worst offenders are those who, like our friend, whom I formerly quoted, publicly confessed in the newspaper, that though our national cooking was abominably bad, it was thoroughly English and therefore he could not but uphold it and even glory in it! just as the common expression as to the "glorious uncertainty" of our Law sufficiently proves the existence of similar views respecting the even administration of Justice, which has ever been regarded as the supreme test of civilisation in more fortunate lands.

A second and still larger division—embracing nearly all that solid, substantial, sober class which is generally described as the backbone of our nation, and which I may add for its extreme stolidity, not to say stupidity, undoubtedly forms an efficient barrier to political revolution—will tell you it has always been so for hundreds of years and that we have no wise suffered from it, that no finer, healthier, or stouter boys and men can be found than in our own country, and, lastly, in all probability will produce that fine old crusted argument that what was good enough for their parents is good enough for them.

A third and by no means an inconsiderable section, imbued with the same spirit of unreasoning Conservatism as the former with more than their pride, aspire to place the subject on a still higher plane. They will unblushingly tell you that our bad cooking is nothing but the outcome of our Spartan severity and self-denial, which scorns to exercise our talents or our wits upon such petty matters. Of such are Carlyle, Dr. Johnson, and indeed the greater bulk of our would-be philosophers, who, be it remarked, as their stomachs grew weaker and their teeth fell out, recanted in their old age the errors of their youth and unconsciously disproved the truth of their early boasts by bewailing bitterly the lost digestion which neither drugs nor science could avail to restore. Among ladies another plea will often be raised. They will tell you that French men and women have a natural turn for these things which it is hopeless for average English women to rival, no teaching will avail where there is no talent, etc., and in proof they will quote you, as a matter of common knowledge, how this or that girl can never be taught to cook, while this or that woman takes to it like a duck to water.

But is not this a clear confirmation of our alleged neglect and our insane indifference to what science, experience and common knowledge tell us? Is it probable or possible that an art of consummate importance to the nation as well as to the individual can be so easily acquired that it comes to us without striving? Must we be told that we cannot hope to vie with other nations in any art or industry, because there will certainly be some who excel and others who lag behind? Must our boys not run, or read, or write, because all cannot win the prize? Most true it is, and "pity 'tis, 'tis true," that neither in England or Timbuctoo is it given to all to be Soyers or Francatellis, but is it reasonable, that none should try, because so many fail? And here we touch upon the central blot and fault of Englishmen in this and many other matters. They scorn to do their best, because their conceit lures them on to a false security. In war they are never prepared: but are always convinced that as they have won in the past so they will win in the future, not so much by dint of skill or merit as by virtue of being Englishmen. This is the spirit, or to be more exact,

a manifestation of that manifold spirit of Englishmen which foreigners cannot easily endure. It is this "triple brass" of conceit, self-complacency and faith in themselves that "hits the foreigner in the eye," so to speak. And well for England that it should be so. But let us take heed that it remain so; for this lofty disdain of the foreigner—nay, far worse, *our faith in ourselves*—is fast passing away, and it is to preserve this high resolve, this imperial bearing, that I am chiefly induced to pen these lines. Time was, when we could afford to act thus—Time was, when every Englishman thought himself equal to ten Frenchmen, even though his cooking was bad and he possessed "but one sauce to three hundred religions." But alas! we are now fast losing our self-confidence. We turn hither and thither for help and instruction, not shaming even to invite the criticism of our own Colonies and craving the gracious support and sympathy of our erstwhile rebellious kinsmen across the Atlantic. We are beginning seriously to ask ourselves, "Are we the men we were?"

But to return to our muttens, or rather our mutton chops. In cookery, as in war, we trust to luck rather than to art. In war we say, "Englishmen always win: they have stout hearts, strong arms, and indomitable pluck, what more do you want?" But what is the result? Confusion, useless expenditure of national wealth, and, what is more deplorable still, of human hearts and lives. Think of the sorrowing homes, think of the desolate hearths that have been caused by the trifling neglect of an official here and there, of public indifference as to a vote-in-aid, or perhaps from mere want of system—a still more notably British defect. So it is in Cookery. Think of the brutal husbands, the outraged wives, the deserted hearths that are caused by bad Cookery. No doubt the Northern nations have always been given to hard-drinking; hard, fierce men have always drunk hard. From the earliest dawn of Northern history we hear of heroes drinking to their enemies' confusion out of the skulls of their slaughtered foemen. But let us not forget that we cannot play the plundering Norsemen and the pioneer of civilisation at one and the same time. If we did not continually flaunt our superiority in the eyes of the world because we turn out more ginger-beer bottles, waterproofs,

paper boots, and calico lengths than any nation in Europe, we might explain away our bibulosity, just as the defects of a savage are pardoned in consideration of his savagery.

In truth, much of our propensity to drink must be set down to bad Cooking. Instead of the insane measures for harassing publicans and brewers and the idiotic attempts to make men more sober by Act of Parliament, we would do well to make laws for purer and cheaper beer, and bestir ourselves to form a National School of Cookery and oust the foreign cooks who live upon our plunder.

Do we not hear every day, "Anybody can cook. It only requires a little care and a little patience, you have only got to put your mind to it," etc.? The truth is Englishmen despise cooking as an art. They have ever scorned to practise the arts of war in time of peace, and thus are never prepared to take the field. So is it with Cookery. They have never been able to get it into their stupid national head that Cookery is not only the most elemental, but also the most indispensable of human arts.

Take any Englishman singly, and he will gladly admit—especially if he has crossed the Channel or has some smattering of Taste—that British Cookery, as a whole, is not only incredibly bad, but incredibly wasteful, and incredibly extravagant. And yet I ask my readers what collective attempt on a truly national scale has ever been made to remedy this error: for example, to start a National School for Cookery, or in view of this special national defect, to establish municipal kitchens or compel an examination to be passed by every woman before she takes to herself a husband, in order that she may not make a drunkard of him, or drive him to the public-house out of sheer desperation.

It is surely pertinent, that so long as the Norman spirit overbore the Saxon, our Cooking, to judge by the elaborate Cookery-books of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, must have been more French than the French, and as un-English in our modern sense as it well could be. Perhaps there may be some subtle connection between speech and palate which we may not in our present state of science understand. It is at least curious that with the fall of the Norman-French and the full-fledging of English sentiment, English language, and what

many call a true English King—although in the male line Henry VII. must have been a pure-bred Welshman—we should have abandoned the varied if highly-flavoured bills-of-fare of the Norman-French cookery and gradually fallen back, possibly out of sheer antipathy to our Norman masters, to the ponderous meats, and the gorging and guzzling proclivities which originally earned us from our conquerors the title of Saxon hogs.

It cannot be said that we lack teachers in these matters, nor the example, nor even, thanks to our love of travel, the experience of other countries. Some of the first pioneers of Hygienic, Sanitary, and Domestic Science have been Englishmen, who have written long and largely upon such matters. So deeply persuaded was the great Duke of Wellington of the wastefulness, extravagance and incompetence of English camp cooking, that he procured the services of one of the greatest masters of the French School of Cookery to remodel entirely the system of British Canteen and Commissariat. But in vain. Scarcely had the hand of the Iron Duke relaxed its hold than the "vis inertiae" of the British stomach prevailed and the movement failed literally through the want of taste of those whom it was intended to benefit; in short, John Bull sighed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and eagerly returned to the tough half-cooked meats of his childhood in a spirit of cheerful impenitence.

Let us then take it for granted that we are all at one upon the imperfections of our Cookery. Surely from this it is but a step for each one of us to bend all his energies to pluck from among us this stain, this national reproach. Must we abandon our oft-repeated boast, shall we give up our noble and all-worthy determination, to stand in the van of civilisation, for the want of a dainty chop? Shall the sons of the heroes of Poitiers and Crécy and Waterloo, who have faced Europe in arms, quail before the difficulties of a fried potato? Perish the thought!

Nor is it surely a want of appreciation on our part that can stand as our excuse, as is clearly proved by the herds of foreigners, objectionable or otherwise, who in the most literal sense prey upon our vitals, and minister, with more or less imposture, at rates quite disproportionate to their services, to our higher culinary requirements. There can be no doubt about the demand. Is it not, therefore, lamentable that the women of

England cannot rise to the occasion and prove to the world that they can satisfy the higher needs, as well as the bare, gross necessities of their male belongings?

Look to it, women of England! that you do not tarnish that reputation for frugality and housewifery which was once yours and which has now passed away to the haus-frau of your German congeners. Shall the fair name of the British matron be jeopardised for the want of a brown sauce? Yet it cannot be doubted that, unless women set their houses in order and apply themselves to cooking reform, our race must surely degenerate. Let every woman who cooks her husband's dinner badly, remember that she is from carelessness, stupidity, or neglect, which but a very little care and knowledge would avoid, not only shortening her husband's life but contributing to the decay and final elimination of our race. For nothing is more sure in the light of modern science than that a nation can only survive through its fitness to keep the lead. We are already becoming a toothless and, by leaps and bounds, a hairless race. It only remains for us to have no stomach. Dyspepsia is fast becoming the sign of the Anglo-Saxon race. One has only to look at the advertisements of nerve-tonics, stomach-pills, drugs, and so forth to realise the full extent of the evil.

Again, let us reflect upon the enormous national loss incurred through this same want of culinary skill, which is at once our boast and our shame. For not only do we put hundreds of thousands into the pockets of undeserving foreigners who haunt our shores to minister to our luxury and literally take the bread from the Englishman's mouth, but by this same culinary ignorance the well-to-do classes in search of change of air and scene never, as in other lands, seek recreation at home if they can possibly find the time or money to spend it abroad, with the result that no class of caterer has yet arisen at home that can in any way compare with the worst of any other European nation. The restaurateur, the hotel-manager, the high-class caterer throughout England is, and has been for the last fifty years, a Frenchman, a German, a Swiss, anybody but an Englishman, to the enormous national loss, and by slow degrees the almost complete extinction of the native article.

In those few cases where Englishmen of the upper classes



with money to spend, either from being unable to travel or being tied by business or other reasons, are compelled to satisfy themselves with taking their pleasure in an English watering-place or an English health-resort—while they will *probably* be waited upon by half-taught German apprentices or other undesirable aliens whose only talent consists in mangling the King's English, and if the hotel be "*first-class*" according to British ideas, most *surely* a German manager will preside,—the prices will *as surely* rise to a scale which is unknown in other lands, *and as surely* be wholly disproportioned to the refreshments and food supplied. In a word, there is no more gross and inexcusable disparity between value received and money paid out, than in our average British Hostelrys, and no more unblushing extortioners than our British "Hosts and Hostesses!" whose only object seems to be to deter a traveller from repeating the experiment of "leaving home" if he can possibly help it.

Indeed, we have no hotels at all, properly so-called from a Continental point of view; they are simply public-houses to which a certain number of rooms have been added; no order, no discipline, no service, nothing that can fairly be said to compare with ordinary foreign hotel accommodation. In London, in three or four fashionable places of resort, and in some large English cities there certainly are some magnificent hotels of recent construction which cannot be included in the former category: but they are equally chargeable with the defect that used to be attributed to the Dutch "of giving too little and asking too much." They lavish enormous sums upon marble, gilding, external show, and interior magnificence, without conferring any special advantage upon their clients beyond that of paying an exorbitant amount, in exchange for what would be considered abroad third-class attendance, cooking, service, and accommodation. In a word, throughout England it may be safely said that the principal difference between the most pretentious and palatial hotel and the humblest public-house consists in the greater or less *variety* of ill-cooked food, and the greater or less amount of extortionate charges. The British wayside inn is occasionally moderate of charge, and at times provides good wholesome country cheer—and snug withal, if situate in an out-of-the-way untravellered region: but let an "attraction" arise in the

neighbourhood—a Roman villa fresh dug out, or a ghost seen in a neighbouring ruin—and at once a wing of bedrooms is added, London prices are unblushingly charged, while the accommodation and fare remain entirely unaltered.

In a recent riding tour through Cornwall and Devon, I met everywhere with uniform London-high-class-hotel-charges from each aspiring "pub" which had the hardihood or cunning to write itself down Hotel. Whether built of clay or granite, mud or brick, roadside bungalow or seaside "palace," the beds, the fleas, the food and the cooking and, above all the bread, were all alike from first to last indistinguishable except by their bills from the average country inn, and in all cases greatly inferior to the remotest tavern of the Continent in comfort, cleanliness or board. At Blackpool, where I write these lines—reluctantly compelled by sleeplessness to spend a week at that strange Medley of unequalled Air, Dirt, and Prices,—though comfortably housed in what I am assured to be its premier Hotel—I am compelled to take my meals at a neighbouring "grillroom" because the Hotel Restaurant (save the mark!), which is wholly managed by aliens, and aspires to French cookery (!), whether in comfort, cooking, or quality of food and wine, is little better than a "guingette" at Montmartre, or a riverside speishaus of Berlin. Again, if one could expect Hotel-Keepers anywhere to put their best foot forward, it should be Bournemouth, the queenly and aristocratic paragon of seaside resorts. I can only say I have tried them all in turn and found them "all worse than one another" (whatever that may mean). Is it then surprising that Englishmen in search of holiday retreats pour their millions into foreign coffers instead of visiting the numberless beauties (which abound in every part of the three Kingdoms), from which the ordinary tourist is deterred not only by the fearsome quality of the cooking he encounters, but even more, by the incredible extortion of rapacious innkeepers ?

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE DECLINE OF THE SENSE OF HONOUR

TIME was when the imputation of falsehood between man and man, or boy and boy, could only be wiped out in blood. Britons displayed a sensitiveness upon this head to which no other nation bore comparison. It is difficult to say whether Englishmen were always more jealous of their honour in this respect than men of other lands, or whether it is fair to deduce from this trait that they were more truthful. The fact remains that in this respect at least they were at one time more punctilious than any other race of men. The reason may be possibly sought in this, that a wider distinction is made with us than with others between a fib, or a white lie, and a black lie of the deepest dye to which alone amongst ourselves the term of lie is usually confined. On the Continent there is no such subtlety and sophistry; the term "lying" is applied to all categories alike, and it is not unusual, especially among the southern races, to hear two men tell each other that they lie, meaning that they err or do not speak the truth, or are attempting to "cram" and so forth. Whatever the cause, they often give the lie to each other without either party considering that a deadly insult has been perpetrated which only blood can wipe out.

The smallest schoolboy in England in my younger days at the word or imputation of a lie, even from his closest and dearest school friend, would straightway fall upon him, *vi et armis* in mortal combat. Your Irish gentleman, who was even more jealous of any imputation in this regard, probably because he is of all men most inclined thereto, was even more certain to avenge instantly with any handy missile from a poker to a decanter the charge of being a liar, with results to the company and furniture generally—in the good old drinking days, if one may trust tradition—which were, to say the least, highly unpleasant.

After a long residence abroad I was struck to find the change among my countrymen which runs alike through every class and

grade from highest to lowest. Is this change merely to be attributed to the greater distance we have travelled from the time when every gentleman who wore a sword by his side was bound to avenge affronts at the peril of his life, and could only regain the esteem of his fellows, after being called a liar, by a combat of life and death? Or is it that as a nation of shopkeepers—according to the all too true sarcasm of the great Napoleon—our commercial instincts have so quickly sapped the finer feelings of our pre-shopkeeping era, and gradually permeated every class of the nation? Or, again, is it that the decline of sensitiveness to insult upon this head is to be sought in the rapid increase of lying which business habits most surely engender, whereas the same being formerly regarded with greater horror, detection was naturally visited with a higher penalty? That the Englishman of pre-machinery days, before commerce had corrupted his blood and turned his head, was less truthful and straightforward than his Continental neighbour, or that he was more quick to avenge an insult or to perceive an affront, cannot be for a moment maintained in the face of history and tradition. Or that he was by nature of a pugnacious or quarrelsome disposition it is equally impossible to believe: for all history, current literature and caricature alike, concur in describing John Bull as slow to provoke, but when once roused fierce and valiant in the extreme. Swashbucklers and bullies rarely, if ever, compared with other races, were to be found among them. Even when duelling was at its height, if history and current tales be trusted, the practice here was far from universal, and seemed rather the result of foreign importation introduced with the fashions and courts of our various foreign rulers, than an indigenous habit. If we mount higher to the days when we were ruled by British Kings, Tudors and Stuarts, Welsh and Scottish in turn, the practice of duelling, or even the milder exercises of chivalry, were scarcely as popular or widely esteemed in England as upon the Continent; and few things astonished our foreign visitors of a later date so much as to see English gentlemen, when insulted by a working man, pull off their coats and set to work to fight him according to the rules of the prize ring, or if annoyed or insulted by one of his own degree often avenging himself by “punching his opponent’s head” instead of

resorting to the arbitrament of the sword, which alone, according to Continental ideas, befitted a quarrel among gentlemen.

The lesson which it seems safe to draw is that chivalry, with all its accompanying graces, qualities and defects, only prevailed among the rough English in so far as Norman prevailed over Saxon, and that, as the Anglo-Saxon element prevailed, chivalry, refinement and sensitiveness would naturally decline among a rough and coarse-fibred race such as the Saxons undoubtedly were, with the result that such duelling as occurred among Englishmen, at least since Plantagenet days, has been mainly instigated by court fashions and foreign ideas coming in the train of their foreign rulers; while the observed peculiarity of noblemen "punching each other's heads," and those of lower degree who thwarted them in street fight or tavern brawl, proceeded rather from their own coarse habits not unmixed with that good-humoured love of sport, which sought rather than avoided the occasion of displaying personal strength and prowess.

Two questions then arise of the utmost interest. In abolishing duelling, which, as we have seen, never flourished in our midst outside the circle of a foreign court or the compulsory practice of an alien code of honour in the army and navy, have we not given ourselves credit for a self-denying reformation of national habit which is neither supported by history or any known succession of facts?

The practice of duelling, which had at an early date almost died out in England, though still rampant as ever among the more fiery Celts of Northern Scotland and Ireland, acquired a greatly increased stimulus during the Peninsular War, where Spanish and Portuguese intercourse and military practice both tended to its renewed exercise: while the Allied Occupation after the Battle of Waterloo, when French fire-eaters revenged themselves upon their defeat by "calling out" and insulting on every occasion their foreign invaders, was the cause of such widespread disaster and prejudiced the nation to such an extent against a practice in which, more especially with the sword, their foreign rivals displayed so marked a superiority—that the tide was definitely turned against a habit which, as we have seen, was rather exotic than indigenous.

As time went on, however, that love of Cant, and Hypocrisy,

which we owe to the unfortunate religious and political quarrels of post-Reformation days, naturally suggested the notion of glorifying ourselves upon this "noble act of self-sacrifice and devotion," till Duelling has become a favourite subject, along with Monte Carlo, to cast in the teeth of our European neighbours, as a signal difference which marks out an Englishman from other civilized beings, and one which enables him to hold up his head among the nations and stalk abroad decked in broadest phylacteries, thanking his stars that he is not as other men!

There remains the portentous question: Are we a people that can afford to do without duelling? Strong as is the conviction that was borne in upon me long before I had any experience of foreign residence and travel, that we of all people of the earth are less adapted to dispense with what must be considered the most efficient check against the rudeness and incivility or brutality of its most objectionable members, my conviction is ten-fold increased by my revised survey of the England of to-day—where the "snob" of yesterday or the "bounder" of to-day, especially in the upper classes, has well-nigh succeeded in placing society at his feet. There can be no question that, philosophically speaking, there is little or no reason in duelling: for the self-constituted judge of the social offender having no special rights, and being guarded by no special sanction, naturally runs the risk of turning poetic justice to naught in his attempt to right the wrongs of outraged society, unless he be a more adroit swordsman or a better shot than his adversary.

According to the common argument, in a settled society, where competent judges are provided to right wrongs and redress injury, there can, or should be at any rate, no pretext for establishing such extra-judicial rites. But such argument is futile; because it is not the criminal who inflicts the deepest wounds upon social order, but the sneaking or hectoring ruffian, who, while cunning enough to keep his neck from the noose and his valued person from the grip of the policeman, too often conceals under a fashionable exterior the coarseness and brutality of the gutter. While it must be owned that Sensitiveness and Delicacy are scarcely our National attributes, few men are more patient, more long-suffering, more tolerant of

their kind, than Englishmen, or give more freely scope for eccentricity and peculiarity; indeed his whole training from school upwards is democratic in the extreme. Consequently, the checks of social control and delicate manœuvres devised to oust unpleasant and obnoxious members, are almost, if not wholly, absent, or if exercised, fall utterly flat, in a country where the rights of the individual possess such abnormal weight. On the other hand the real, if unavowed, leaning of English society, tending strongly, as it unquestionably does, towards vulgarity and horse play, however thinly concealed under the veil of propriety, accords the widest hospitality to all who seek to enliven our society—confessedly the dullest and least versatile of human gatherings—by originality of any description.

Nor has our natural brutality and coarseness been improved by closer intercourse with North American habits and Yankee methods of business or speech. With even more than our own native mealy-mouthedness and disinclination to call a spade a spade, your American male or female is at bottom a more sensuous and unrefined animal than his cousins on this side of the water, and though he guesses that he can “teach ’em to sit up” as he elegantly terms it, and possibly even “to take a back seat” in the latest varieties of commercial and financial roguery—in matters of taste, culture and refinement, they must be ranked in all ways our inferiors, with this important exception, that up to the present date at any rate, your American is not only courteous and gallant but distinctly more amenable to the firm if secret control of the gentler sex, than is his English cousin.

For however much the Teutons astonished the Romans, if we may trust Tacitus, by their respect for woman, so marked in itself and so different from the position held by woman among the other savage tribes with which they were acquainted, it cannot be denied that there is no country in which so much brutality towards the weaker sex is displayed—from the cottage to the palace—as in ours. Our very laws, to say nothing of our police-courts, reek with instances of the sad and ever-declining position occupied by woman in this country. While, however, it must be admitted that the highest and lowest classes here in England treat their wives and womankind generally with scant respect, the ennobling and elevating laws of chivalry unquestion-

ably lifted women in England to a higher level throughout the middle ages surviving even the debasing circumstances of the Restoration, as may be easily seen, through the veil of history and tradition, by a certain grace of speech and refinement of manner on the part of men of birth and education—as plainly appears in the Court life of Elizabeth and onwards, even down to the very verge of the Revolution.

Unfortunately, while freeing England from the domination of Rome by the rejection of our last British King, the still coarser manners and habits of our Dutch masters, followed later by the dull gluttony and unrelieved dissoluteness of our new German rulers, inaugurated between them, through precept and example, an era of drunkenness and debauchery which dragged the nation down to an-unexampled depth of degradation by the end of the eighteenth century. When John Bull's chief resource was Drunkenness and Pugilism and so-called Sport, consisting mainly of setting on dogs to torment and worry wolves, bulls, and bears chained to a stake, or the betting of huge sums on the life or death of a cock, it is scarcely surprising that the already brutalized Saxon temperament released from the irksome code of chivalry, and fortified by the example of foreign masters even more degraded than himself, should have dragged down Woman along with himself into the slough of national decay from which she was destined to emerge through the fiery ordeal of blood which ended in Waterloo.

Professor Max Müller—surely of all men the mildest, most tolerant, and imbued with the highest feelings of a noble and exalted Christianity—when he held the Professorship of English Languages at Oxford, being questioned on a notable occasion, in respect of the duels he had fought at Leipzig University, justified duelling as a dire necessity whereby the better and more refined might thus keep in order and awe the rougher elements; and he admitted that few things astonished him more than to find that the practice of duelling at Oxford was practically unknown. Here his biographer, who tells the story with truly British self-complacency, adds as an appropriate comment, "We at Oxford are luckily able to dispense with such necessity." To this I reply, Are we? Can anyone who has followed the newspaper reports of the exhibition of upper-class blackguardism



during the Cambridge University riots of November, 1905; or can anyone who has had the experience of a London season, or who has lived the life of a "man about town," who has shot pigeons at Hurlingham, or played polo at Ranelagh, or gambled at Monte Carlo, or raced at Newmarket and frequented the fashionable clubs—can any of them doubt, that unless the regeneration of English Society is brought about by the return to duelling or some similar alternative tribunal for the due conservation of social rights, such as that which under the term "Ragging" in the army has been of late with no small advantage to society, adopted—our collapse into a social state of primitive barbarism cannot be long deferred.

It has often been remarked of late how detection in the most disgraceful crimes brings little but temporary disgrace or rejection by society in these unregenerate days. Not long ago an English judge was fain to say that in his *early* days bankruptcy was considered disgraceful. Now-a-days to be a bankrupt here as in America seems rather a feather in one's cap, and is at any rate amply made up for if a man by swindling his creditors can prove that he is "smart" enough to keep his money and shake off his debts by one and the same act. Similarly swindling, provided it is not done on too contemptible a scale, is quite a fashionable means of acquiring notoriety. A baronet of good family acquired high popularity by having proved in the Transvaal that an English soldier was not considered to have disgraced himself or his regiment by taking a prominent part in a ridiculous and ill-concerted attack upon a friendly power; while a Scotch nobleman not unconnected with Court became quite a pet of the season through rumours, not wholly misplaced, that he had succeeded in carrying away a very large share of the spoils in a swindling company, of which he was a dummy director.

As for divorce, some of the most charming and interesting women that adorn London Society have not only been divorced, but are in a fair way, as far as the eye can judge, of repeating the same operation as soon as a suitable chance occurs. While as to card cheating, by male or female, the bare suspicion of possessing the art of turning up an ace whenever desirable, is rather considered to lend an additional charm, and excites the deepest

interest and speculation about the lucky man in question on the part of the gentler sex. As for any penalties attaching to the discovery or connection with crime or concerted roguery, unless, from long impunity the performer grows careless and suffers public conviction, the idea is too ridiculous for discussion; the only question that really interests us moderns in such a connection being, whether or not the game is worth the candle.

Let us take, for example, a certain newspaper which, for so many years, has controlled public opinion in England that its name has come to be almost synonymous with British Providence. I ask once more if the disgraceful exposure of the Piggott versus Parnell conspiracy has ever dimmed its fortune or lost that newspaper so much as a single subscriber? or has the vulgar iteration with which its pitiful Encyclopedia was pressed upon a deluded public, exerted any permanent influence in modifying its successful career? Indeed, do we Englishmen ever really care for disgrace—unless cash or loss of place be the result? or do we ever now-a-days reprobate crime where it is inconvenient to do so, or declaim against wrong-doing except to turn a sentence, to emphasise an opinion, or illustrate an anecdote?

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### OUR EGREGIOUS GOVERNMENT

#### COUPLED WITH A FEW REFLECTIONS UPON OUR EMPIRE

IN the Political World our state of chaos is not less remarkable. Beginning with the wholly groundless and truly British assertion that we are blessed with what we call a "Glorious Constitution," whereas alone among civilized nations we possess no constitution at all—which same deficiency constitutes one of our most glaring national dangers—our system of government—if such a name can be applied to what is not a system at all but rather a collection of traditional habits and usages with an occasional maxim of a distinguished statesman thrown in, the most striking features whereof consist in an insane clinging to obsolete phrases, offices, and methods wholly inapplicable to modern ideas coupled with ceremonial usages, wholly farcical, meaningless, and out of date, which make up in British eyes for their intrinsic absurdity and uselessness by their respectable antiquity—in spite of many honest attempts at reform has successfully resisted all innovation or improvement.

So we blunder along, with what we please to call our Government, which in the flesh usually consists of a large number of amiable friends or relatives of the champion talker of the House, successively nominated at an enormous salary to various posts whose titles are derived from the middle ages and whose sphere of action and responsibility is as ill-defined and dubious as their names—trying to "carry on His Majesty's Government"—as the slang phrase goes—or, as a matter of fact, to stave off as long as possible the popular indignation and disgust at the slovenliness and unbusinesslike character of their methods, in which they are largely aided and abetted by six or seven hundred individuals, who, while avowedly despatched to Parliament to check the ever-rising expenditure of government and to represent the interests of their section of country, are mainly concerned to advertise their own talents through the Press, and devise fresh burdens for the patient taxpayer.

When at length the neglect of public business or the reckless

disregard of public requirements evinced by the Premier, or his cynical indifference to all or any public advantage except maintaining his party in power by a reckless expenditure of public money upon his greedy followers, or an unfortunate war, into which, as is usual with us, we have accidentally tumbled without knowing how or why, or an unusual crop of expensive offices mainly invented to stop the mouth of the opposition—or a combination of all these things, lashes John Bull to the verge of madness, he turns angrily upon his oppressors and hunts them from office, until he is once more pacified by the lying professions of his new masters, who penitently vow to him, that nothing will ever cause them to swerve from the path of duty, and that retrenchment of Governmental expenses will be their sole object of solicitude. Then, all reform is abandoned, apathy reigns once more, and for six or seven years the same pantomime continues, the taxes rising higher and higher with unflinching regularity, while the long-suffering taxpayer finds that the change from Government to Opposition and *vice versa*, represents the difference betwixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Nor does our stupidity end here. Because there were two parties in the State two hundred years ago, one of which desired to oust the hereditary line of monarchs for reverting to the ancient religion, while the other determined at all hazard to secure a Protestant succession, we are doomed apparently so long as Britons exist to call ourselves Tories and Whigs, though the very origin of those recondite terms are only known to the skilled antiquary, and the analogy of meaning, and still more its connection with present-day policy, is wholly lost in the mists of tradition and antiquity. None can deny that a large majority of Englishmen are guided solely in recording their vote by the memory of ancestral usage or the tradition that their fathers before them were accustomed at election time to wear a yellow or blue rosette. National interests and the common weal do not necessarily enter at all into the strife for power between Government and Opposition, which is the beginning and end of British politics. Suffice it for the Government to propose a scheme for public advantage, for the Opposition to put forth all its powers of argument, satire or denunciation, to prevent or obstruct by any means in their

power, the same being carried into effect; not from any rooted dislike of the measure, nay, it is not unusual to see them adopt it themselves when they have an opportunity, but solely and entirely for the purpose of unseating their opponents. From this it may be easily seen that when seven hundred councillors are assembled, four hundred of whom are banded together to pass a popular measure of utility and the remaining three hundred spare no trick or device to prolong the debate night and day in order to tire out their opponents and so compel them to abandon the Bill—it is not surprising that progress is slow, important business is shelved, and Government tactics rather than the advancement of public measures become the order of the day. Add to this that the Irish members, who through some chicanery of bygone days, have even more than their due share of representation, and consequently import more than their due share of useless interruption and mischievous obstruction into general business for which they have neither care nor concern—exert their monkey-like ingenuity by an adroit use of the “forms-of-the-House”—as they are euphemistically termed—but which might more truly be called absence-of-form, or “happy-go-lucky” methods—to gain more than a fair share of attention to their numberless grievances and requirements. This in turn acts disastrously upon English and Scotch business, simply because the collective stupidity (called “Conservatism”) of the majority of Englishmen refuses to accept the common-sense method adopted by every other civilised nation of delegating business to those whom the business concerns; with the natural result that English business cannot be carried through on account of the jealous or mischievous interference of the Scotch or Irish members, while in their turn the English members revenge themselves when Irish and Scotch business is brought forward for discussion, by paying off old scores in maiming or thwarting the cherished demands of the sister countries.

I am quite aware that many thoughtless if fervent Imperialists will exclaim that we have at any rate made an Emperor of our King during the past hundred years, and have acquired vast accessions of territory which have placed us on a different footing as regards other nations from that which we occupied a century and a half ago.

To this I reply that it cannot surely be disputed that little England single-handed held her own with some distinction six centuries ago, when the gallant Black Prince overran France at his will and had the French Monarch, the King of Scotland, and the King of Cyprus locked up in London at one time. Nor is it easy to see how Englishmen have benefited by their monarch bearing in addition to the proud title of King of England, the paper Crown of conquered India conferred upon him through a Jewish adventurer whose garish and theatrical instincts caused him to entertain the eccentric notion that by the late Queen's assumption of the title of Empress the sway of England might become less distasteful to the Indian princes under her rule. Few at the time attached much importance to an act which was expected to enhance the importance of the sovereign in the eyes of her Indian subjects at the expense of a harmless if foolish display of court pageantry. But since an Emperor or Empress supposes an Empire, the scattered dominions acquired by Britain's venturesome traders and colonizing sons in various parts of the earth's surface, loomed bigger and bigger in the nation's eye, until from colonies they acquired the importance of a settled and connected Empire. These ideas, carefully fomented by the "Jingo Press" of the country, rapidly infected the entire nation, and, above all, the rising generation, with an exaggerated estimate of Britain's position and policy, not only out of all proportion to existing facts, but, what was far worse, had the effect of directly tending to launch England into a score of wild enterprises, either for the preservation of her own or the acquisition of fresh territory, which, while adding but little to her resources, has crippled the nation and fixed upon her children for ever a crushing burden of debt wholly disproportionate to the resulting gain.

As usual the consolidation, or indeed anything approaching to an attempt at unifying the vast territories which acknowledge the English rule, has been either futile or scarcely attempted for any sincerer purpose than to gain a party triumph. In no sense in which the word "empire" has been hitherto applied can Great Britain be seriously considered to be an empire at all. Large possessions she certainly has, scattered here and there over the globe, but those that are colonised by her own children are of no more service to her in an Imperial sense as contributing to

her wealth and power than if they were wholly independent. Indeed, the tendency is entirely in the opposite direction.

As for India, with a cynicism and cruelty which cannot be sufficiently deplored, we have persisted year by year in depleting that once rich and prosperous country which our sons had won for us by the sword, till it needs but the failure of a monsoon or an unequal distribution of the yearly rains for millions of our unhappy fellow-subjects to be doomed to a frightful death.

Only the Englishman who is utterly ignorant of the true condition of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Hindustan, or else is utterly case-hardened to every sentiment of humanity or national honour, can derive any satisfaction from the possession of a country which, while it affords an unequalled hunting-ground for needy adventurers and fattens an unlimited amount of British officials, brings so little profit to the English Exchequer and such discredit to its masters, that were it not for the jealousy of neighbours and dislike of letting it fall into the hands of a rival, no valid reason for its retention could easily be advanced.

The latter quarter of the last century was spent by Englishmen in a spirit of growing optimism and buoyant anticipation, the preceding quarter having raised our national finances to a position that seemed unassailable. The last ten years of the century have forcibly brought before us the painful fact that we were at last giving way to our foreign rivals whose originally bad start in the race of commerce had filled us so long with the rooted conviction that England was the rightful mistress of the commerce as well as the seas of the world.

The Boer War has completed our awakening. Those among us who look ahead and read the inexorable logic of facts cannot but see that while we talk so much of empire, all that we really can rely upon in bad times is the assistance of a handful of gallant kinsmen over the seas who will help us in our little wars to the best of their ability so long as we pay their expenses to the full not only in times of war but even in times of peace. That our amateur administrators in days of stress or hurry lose all control of the reins of government and bid everyone come and help themselves as they please out of the national purse—that when things go badly and the tide turns against us, the gallantry

of our fighting race that triumphed at Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt is sure to come to the front, and, all untrained as it is and therefore unfitted to meet the professional armies of the Continent on equal terms, seldom fails by sheer courage and self-sacrifice to rescue the name of England from the obloquy to which the failures of her generals and the want of forethought of her amateur statesmen have so often brought her—is but to repeat a well-worn tale.

It was plain to the thoughtful that with all the talk of Empire and Imperial designs the entire machinery for Imperial Government was absent. No effective provision had been made, nor even now can the wit of our statesmen devise a plan for averting in the future such and similar calamities. For the first time England's credit was seriously shaken, to say nothing of the credit of her army, upon whose efficiency in the last resort the credit of the nation must always stand or fall. Consols fell from 109 to below 80, and her spending power, which has not yet recovered the severe blow upon her resources involved by the Boer War, tell too plainly the tale that the reckless piling up of debt, fostered by a careless administration and abetted by a time-serving and unpatriotic Press ever ready to defend the extravagance of each successive Government whose booty they share, have brought us to the point when instead of, as in the last century, looking out for new worlds to conquer, we should do well to look to our finances, demand a contribution from our Colonies proportionate to our outlay for their protection, set our house in order and purify the government, and, abolishing our system of administration, civil and military, by amateurs, set up competent machinery and train up a body of skilful administrators for adequately managing our vast possessions. Or else, abandoning our Imperial pretensions of the past, we should forestall the future by turning our Colonies adrift before they adopt the same course towards ourselves, and be content to play the part of old England as gloriously as in the past, without hankering after visions of Empire, to which our position as an island must prove always a serious, if not an insurmountable, bar.

The Boer War has shown us, at all events, that we cannot go on for ever falling into wars through the incompetence of our



statosmen, trusting to luck to fall out again, without severe loss—paying fabulous sums wrung from the already impoverished taxpayers in supporting gigantic armaments at sea and land, and squadrons in every part of the habitable or inhabitable globe, patrolling the shores of such unprofitable deserts as west and north Australia and Guinea for the sake of a handful of inhabitants who form part of our so-called Empire, but who refuse with a firmness and good sense which does them infinite credit to pay a single penny for our enormous outlay in their exclusive behalf, so long as we are vain or foolish enough to furnish them for nothing.

In considering the whole situation one is puzzled to know whether stupidity or thoughtlessness or vanity plays the larger part in the ridiculous situation in which we find ourselves. Is there a practical man with any knowledge of business in the first place who would act as a British Government acts and always has acted in the past; who, instead of training up administrators for the difficult duties they are called upon to fulfil, from all time have been accustomed to consider a Government post, whether it be a Colonial Secretary or a High Commissioner, as an appropriate reward for the man who has shown the greatest talent as a thick-and-thin supporter of the Government; who habitually nominate to the anxious and responsible position of a British judge the man who displays the most wit in getting the Government out of a tight place; who makes a bishop because he writes a good pamphlet supporting a Government measure, or is ready and willing at all times to back his own political party, and, above all, the sacred decrees of the Privy Council; or deems a smart youth with talent for repartee newly-come from Oxford to be the most suitable person for placing at the head of our Army as a War Secretary, not because he is likely to carry on that intricate business with skill or efficiency, but solely and wholly as a target in Parliament against the "heckling" of unpleasant reformers? To all this the only answer that can be made is surely the immortal saying of Galileo, "Eppur si muove" (Still she keeps on). 'Tis true Great Britain still rules the waves, but it cannot be denied that her axis has been rudely shaken of late, our Army, the shuttlecock of party politics, utterly gone and discredited in the eyes of the foreigner, whose

hatred and jealousy of the mistress of the seas, slowly rising since the days of Trafalgar and Waterloo, seeks but an early chance of humbling her in the dust and sweeping away once for all her naval and commercial supremacy.

If we seriously mean to build a real Empire out of the scattered territories under the Union Jack round about the world, let us for heaven's sake play the part of reasonable and practical men. Let us apply the methods which we know so well how to fit to the requirements of business and commerce to the needs of our scattered forces instead of petting the Colonies as we have done for the past fifty years, with the result that they do nothing for us while we are compelled to make vast sacrifices for them. Let us bring the matter to a head once for all lest further disaster befalls us. If our Colonies refuse to share our burdens without which our so-called Empire is a fraud and a sham, would it not be wiser to cast them off before we are ourselves ruined by supporting them, or, more ignominiously still, be ourselves discarded by our ungrateful children ?

Surely here is an example of colossal stupidity, or thoughtlessness, or vanity, which offers a singular contrast to the ancient British character which, as I have tried to show throughout this book, is fast drifting from its old landmarks, and slowly but surely losing one by one its boasted characteristics. Our love of travel and our insane greediness for territorial acquisition, our effusive hospitality to foreigners and our reckless importation of aliens who minister to our luxury, seem to have turned John Bull into a flabby, invertebrate cosmopolite who is neither "fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring"—who, while seeking to conform himself to and adopt all the airs and graces and talents of other nations, for which he is utterly unsuited, has lost the ancient manly attributes which enabled our fierce breed of island bulldogs to overrun the world.

I have advisedly placed vanity in the third position among the motives which induce us to retain our present impracticable position, and few of my readers will gainsay the fact that in nine cases out of ten vanity or empty pride will be found at the bottom of any attempt to defend our illogical quandary. Indeed, as far as regards India, where no tie of affection or humanity or desire for the improvement of the subject races can be urged in

defence of our rule unless it be by a past master of cant and duplicity—what is it but vanity keeps us there? Is it that we may brag of having won by the sword and held by the sword, despite Russian and French bayonets, two hundred and sixty million beings whom, by our superior arms, we have reduced to the veriest slavery and deliberately dragged down to the verge of starvation, murdering them as surely as if another Herod from amongst us had decreed that each year every male child should be slaughtered, by the measures that we have adopted to destroy their trade and diminish their sources of existence? And for what? In order that Manchester and Leeds shall flourish on her ruins and the British taxpayer shall be relieved to a trifling extent out of all proportion to the evil wrought!

It is incredible, if the greater number of Englishmen could only ascertain the real condition of India and the hopeless misery and poverty that our rule has entailed upon this enormous section of the human race, that they would not exclaim with one voice that Indians must no longer be governed by England so long as she finds herself unable to better their lot and rule them in their own interests. It is no exaggeration to say that if we were to pour into Hindustan the entire value of the national debt, entrusting it to honest administrators to lay out for the benefit of India, it would be impossible to restore the vast population to the condition of prosperity which they enjoyed under the rule of the Moguls. What a satire upon our British civilisation! Well might a famous Frenchman exclaim, after visiting the magnificent relics of Mogul art and the great national works now crumbling into decay, that "If the English after a century of possession were to be expelled from the country the only monument of their rule would be a pyramid of empty beer-bottles"!

Again I repeat, be it on a platform or in clubs or in lectures or in articles by soldiers and sailors, do we rise higher in our responsibility towards India than devising the latest naval or military plan for frustrating the Russian's designs by land or guarding India against the dangers of revolt or foreign invasion by sea? Are we to play the parts of mastiffs defending a stolen bone from another hungry dog watching it from afar, not because we value it or because we treasure its possession, so much as because we cannot endure to have it taken away?

Other nations grind their poor to maintain the armies and navies which they think necessary to avert destruction: but it remains for the practical Briton, who glories in his sound good sense, to patrol the entire world at the expense of his own suffering people in order that he may say that "the sun never sets upon his empire" and that its total population (dead, alive or starving) exceeds that of the Cæsars of Imperial Rome!

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### RATES AND TAXES

How is it that we are the only civilized nation who seem to think that nearly all our taxation should be raised at the expense of the two articles which seem, if not necessary, at any rate most conducive to the happiness of the greater number of working men? If we were purely spiritual beings it is probable that we should follow the strict dictates of Science and neither smoke, nor drink coffee or tea, but confine ourselves to pure water like the beasts of the field. But whether rightly or wrongly, the experience of the entire human race demonstrates the apparently ineradicable tendency of humanity towards some or other stimulant which may compensate him, as it would seem, for that loss of nerve and muscle which is the result of severe bodily or intellectual effort. I have before dwelt at some length upon the absurdity and want of logic of a Government which penalizes drink to the highest extent, deliberately raising its price in order to gain the wherewithal to govern, and, while it professes to deplore the bibulous excesses of the nation, is depending almost solely upon that same very vice for its sources of supply. And not content with that, with a canting hypocrisy incredible anywhere but in England, while the Government declaims against and penalizes the drunkard by every conceivable method, it practically drives him to the use of spirits and other highly intoxicating beverages by placing every possible impediment in the way of his obtaining the lighter alcoholic beverages upon anything like moderate terms. For the Government tax doubles the price of beer, which is not so much a luxury as a necessity to the working man, while at the same time in the higher ranks the lightest and cheapest clarets of France are similarly mulcted to the extent of more than cent. per cent., as if for the express purpose of driving poor and rich alike to resort to the stronger and more intoxicating kinds of drinks!

It would seem, according to the practice of other nations, and the dictates of common-sense, that instead of placing an

enormous tax upon income and so discouraging the exercise of men's brains and faculties by indirectly penalizing them, and so directly diminishing the incentive to capital accumulation, or by imposing huge and almost confiscatory death duties, which, by curtailing capital, cut at the root of industrial and other expansion and indirectly diminish the Wage Fund of the nation, it would be more reasonable, at least where an unusual war, expenditure, or other temporary causes require special relief, to graduate the taxation as is done in other countries by taking first in order what is least necessary, and proceeding from luxuries to articles of prime necessity.

After the Franco-German War, the enormous indemnity payable to the Germans was raised in France according to a classified tariff in which luxuries came first and amusements next, graded in order of necessity. No attempt of this kind was made after the Transvaal War, nor, as far as I know, on any preceding occasion when any special strain has been put upon the reserve power of the nation. In an age of luxury where the millionaire is set up as a popular idol by newspapers, novels, stage and society alike, the tendency must ever be upwards or downwards according to the point of view from which you look at it, and sensual gratification, ministered to day by day by fresh inventions, fresh machinery, and fresh methods, must necessarily increase at ever accelerated pace. Further, the statesman, who places an impediment in the use of such luxuries as are not made or manufactured in England and which, consequently, while doing an injury to our own people, confer advantage alone upon our rivals, thereby works a double benefit by first abating the use of luxury and discouraging its increase, or penalizing those who use it to the highest extent, and secondly preventing English capital from being devoted to transient and useless employment for the sole enrichment of the foreigner.

As for amusements, I can hardly think so ill of my nation as to suppose that there would be any hesitation in compelling amusements and entertainments of all kinds to contribute a very large quota towards our national indebtedness, were it not abundantly evident that government in England is so cursed with the obligation of obeying the Press, and the Press is so closely bound up with the prosperity of entertainments, that

nothing short of a national rising would compel the Government to look at the matter from an unbiassed point of view. No other but a stupid nation, nevertheless, would endure such a state of things, and just as the present monstrous anomaly, through which we are deliberately starving the food-producing community of our country upon which the greatest number of our fellow-citizens depend for their existence, prevents us from substituting a real for a deceptive system of Free Trade lest we offend our masters the town artisans therewith, so too, like a helpless flock of sheep we permit our Government to be tied at the heels of scribblers who band themselves together for the purpose not so much of supplying us with news, which is their avowed pretence, as of swaying us to their own selfish ends by what they please to call the agency of Public Opinion, which, freely translated, is the collective use of the longest purses.

The taxation of amusements, in a word, as it was practised in France after the Franco-German War would seem to be the fairest and most rational source of recruitment for the national purse. There a proportionate sum was levied upon every seat in every theatre and every place of amusement. Not a photograph could be taken without its tax or stamp being paid to the Government in excess of the purchase price. In England and America it would seem most useful and reasonable, considering the plague of written matter, to place a tax on newspapers and magazines, along with other useless and objectionable ministers to pleasure, such as motors, bicycles, kodaks, and other like pastimes that are more honoured in the breach than the observance, which would not only be a benefit to the rising intellect of the nation by reducing the annual output of brain-destroying drivel, but would perhaps operate beneficially in deflecting the energies of the scribbler and the photographer into more useful and artistic directions.

#### RATES.

Nothing better exemplifies the collective recklessness of the British Public than his indifference to retrenchment, or any rational system of control, in rates. Having been flattered during the last century for his extraordinary capacity for colonization and self-government, the average Briton looks

upon himself as a heaven-born financier who cannot go wrong do what he will. Being informed by his Press, which is always in favour of money being spent in any manner for whatever purpose by everybody, that the more rates and taxes rise the more obviously the nation is on the up-grade, he is rather proud than otherwise of high taxation and high rates. So far from viewing the rising expenditure of the nation, which in thirteen years has almost doubled itself, with distrust, the average Briton points to it with an air of pride and says, "Look what a rich nation we are! What other nation in the world can afford to spend £150,000,000 a year?"

As it is with our Government, so it is with our rates; for the "public man" of the Municipal or Urban District Council is but a faint reflection of the M.P., and, to paraphrase the words of the immortal Jorrocks, Parliament may be truly described as the image of the Urban Council with all its excitement and expenditure and only 10 per cent. of its danger! For it must be remembered that proud as most of us generally are, probably in the ratio of our ignorance, of our great national law-making machine, sentiment and claptrap aside, it may be considered to be about the most unsuitable machine imaginable to carry out the purpose for which it is conceived. Its checks are nil, and the responsibility of the units which compose it are in like manner hypocryphal. Bad as is the system of raising and spending public money by "local bodies," there are two striking advantages which they possess over our big spending body at Westminster: first, a closer personal responsibility, or at any rate identification of men with measures, and in the second place the greater facility for removing offenders and reversing their policy, whereas once firmly established in public favour and once lauded to the skies by the omnipotent Press, our leading lawtinkers at Westminster are placed beyond human criticism upon a quasi-sacred pedestal of immunity.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### DECLINE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PRESS AND DRAMA

THE key to the degradation of the British and American mind as reflected in its Press and current literature is cheap literary education. The ways of the American Press and the ever-growing desire for what is latest and newest instead of what is best and truest, is the cause of our literature being flooded with cheaply-educated men, whose chief quality is daring and impudence. Imperfectly instructed, with a mere smattering of classical culture, and scarcely a speaking acquaintance with our accredited authors, they start boldly upon what they term a journalistic career, spilling gallons of ink in daily paper, periodical, or magazine work, supplying their shortcomings by what they call "dash," "push," and "ginger," in the elegant slang of their trade.

Is it then marvellous that the produce of such minds goes to swell the literary garbage on which our youth in these days are fain to pasture, to the exclusion of the less exciting, but more solid mental food of pre-American days? It is not easy to see to what end the United States literary purveyors have of late set their minds as well as their dollars to capture the British Press, as they have already attempted to capture our mercantile navy, and, as far as can be seen, are in course of annexing and bending to their own purpose the entire British Drama, lock, stock, and barrel! That there is "money in it," according to their favourite expression, appears likely from the fact that Americans embark upon it. Just as the Jews, whose example they seem to have closely followed in this respect, were at one time totally unable to obtain a footing in British high-class society or politics, but having once firmly seated themselves in the financial and political supremacy which they had so long coveted, soon reaped an abundant social harvest through their wealth and exceptional advantages of advertisement obtained by the subjugation of a large section of the British Press—so, to our American and Canadian cousins, with their keen nose for

dollars and enterprise, coupled with an astonishing pertinacity, it has been easy under the guise of friendship to humiliate the parent country and convert her to Yankee ways, partly through our hospitable indifference, and still more through that dotting partiality for the children of their loins which animates too many otherwise sensible Englishmen.

In still worse plight is our modern theatre, if we are to believe all the piteous cries that emanate from the theatrical toads under the Yankee harrow. It is but a few days ago that a writer of authority in the *St. James' Gazette* declared that, "Great as is the consternation and alarm among theatrical folks at the present condition of popular dissatisfaction and dramatic ineptitude," Mr. Charles Frohman (who, it appears, has already headed a syndicate which successfully bought up several of our London theatres) "is now the most commanding figure on the *British stage, and that so long as he is with us there is no occasion to worry.*"

Coming as it does as an anonymous, and therefore official declaration, that one of the most aristocratic organs in England has finally been seduced by American blandishments to espouse the cause of British dramatic slavery, it is interesting to recall the fact that the aforesaid Mr. Charles Frohman carefully heralded forth the paragraphs of a friendly Press some three months ago, "that the edict had gone forth" (presumably from the voice of his "combine") "that foreign plays no longer go down in London and the United States," and that "United States dramatists are destined to quickly supersede the English as being more cosmopolitan and up-to-date"—which, freely translated, appears to mean that the American combination for exploiting the British stage, having first bought up, or otherwise obtained the control of several London theatres, and forestalled all competition by buying out the services of our principal dramatic authors, has succeeded in making what is called a "corner" in theatrical matters.

Apparently they hope before long to control with such completeness the entire dramatic output on both sides of the ocean that they will be able, with the help of a venal and corrupt Press, to foist whatever rubbish they please upon a patient and unresisting public, and, little by little, wean the British play-

goer from good English pudding, to "Yankee notions," knowing full well, that, so timid and modest is the average Briton in forming his own critical opinion in such directions, it will suffice that the entire Press warmly welcome in the future, as they have done in the past, American stagework and American theatrical methods as specially devised by an all-wise Providence from all time for the regeneration of the British race.

In short, drama as well as literature in general are responsible for two serious wrongs to the public.

In the first place they underrate the public taste, inasmuch as they have been long accustomed to sell their wares, good, bad, and indifferent, at their own price, that is, not so much according to their intrinsic value as according to the estimate which they have bribed the Press to form of their work.

The second evil is that public opinion, to which these gentry appeal, is practically non-existent or dumb in England and America. In America, because the proportion of the people who are competent to judge or who think they are competent to judge, is extraordinarily small; and in England, because the average playgoer and novel-reader has been for many years so carefully trained to servile submission by the impudent self-assertion of an ignorant and venal Press, that he has long since given up all attempt to assert himself, and patiently bows to the judgment of thinly-veiled advertisement, miscalled dramatic and literary criticism.

It has been reserved, however, for America to reap the full use of the Press in milking the dramatic and literary cow to the last drop, squeezing whatever pecuniary benefit could be transferred, by fair means or foul, from the pocket of the producer into the pocket of the journalistic middleman. Upon the same principle of trade by which the producer is robbed of the just fruits of his toil, and the consumer by the same stroke is compelled to pay four or five times the value of the article he buys, Anglo-American ingenuity, aided by a corrupt Press, succeeds in squeezing the author on one hand, and the dramatist on the other, so as to obtain their dramatic stuffs at the lowest possible rate, by a judicious mixture of so-called newspaper criticism varied with thinly disguised blackmail—foisting, so to speak, margarine upon the public at an outrageous advance on

prime cost, while the genuine butter is either put away to be produced when wanted, or dangled in the eyes of the consumer labelled as "the very best procurable" after being largely adulterated, partly to suit the fictitious taste which they themselves create, and still more to suit the exigencies of their own pockets.

Few things are more profitable than to invest capital in buying out, or by skilful blackmailing destroy, the production of good wares where the market is practically unlimited and the demand for the wares extensive; since a monopoly in high-priced literary and dramatic goods enables an unlimited supply of rubbish which is obtained for an old song, to be charged and entered against the public as first-class commodities fully guaranteed by a self-constituted Press tribunal from whose verdict there is no appeal.

For, as I have often in the course of this work remarked and insisted, the bold Britons who vow so frequently that they "never, never, will be slaves," in æsthetic matters are ever ready, nay, anxious to be led by the nose, and to take from the Press those opinions in all matters of taste and culture which they are either too modest or too cowardly to set up and maintain—with the result that public opinion in America and England, apart from the muffled whisper of the club and drawing-room, the public-house and markets, is practically denied expression if it runs "against the money." From this it naturally follows that the current of predominant opinion being hidden beneath the surface, nothing is easier for the Press than to "follow the money" and boldly stick to the paying line of scent, by the simple process of "writing up" whatever most money can be made out of, by stamping out adverse criticism among the highly placed through anonymous sneers not far removed from blackmail, or by ignoring letters of expostulation wherever such a course can be taken with impunity. But we shall be told, can the dramatic authors be accused of serious default so long as the public crowd as they do to the theatre, and the stalls which twenty years ago were comparatively empty, are now frequently filled to overflowing? The reason is not far to seek. Since managers discovered that the modern lady, having too many irons in the fire to attend

to her household, has followed the American fashion in this, as alas! in so many others, of entertaining her friends in hotels and restaurants, they have not been slow to find out that a dinner at a public place of entertainment as necessarily implies theatre to follow, as fish after soup. Add to this what the most cursory observation of feminine nature will enable the dullest to perceive, that when a woman has got guests to entertain with the responsibility of success or non-success of a party upon her shoulders, she is not likely to be over critical about the play to which she has beguiled her guests. Nor is it easy, on the other hand, for even the sternest critic, who finds himself condemned to sit out three hours of "tomfoolery" under the title of musical comedy, to resist the chorus of admiration showered upon the adorable frocks of "Lottie Flyaway" or the exquisite set of "Mr. Plantagenet Languish's" dress shirt, when echoed and re-echoed by the fair creatures with which he is surrounded. Difficult, therefore, as it may be, for even the well-disposed British Manager to acquire a play that is worth putting on the stage, he feels that he can at any rate please the ladies, in whose power it lies to mar or make him, by tasteful furniture and dainty dresses, which in ninety cases out of a hundred are the sole and absorbing objects of interest to lady-playgoers in this trivial and luxurious age: while any symptoms of disaffection that may arise from our gilded youth can always be effectually stopped by a judicious application of pretty faces, shapely limbs and dances, in which street-tumbling, and the fallen arts of a ballet that is past, are strangely mixed up and spiced with as much indelicacy and vulgarity as the fear of the County Council and its myrmidons will admit.

If collusive roguery, euphemistically termed "cornering," flourishes in the City and the Strand in a manner that speaks volumes for the readiness with which Englishmen adopt American fashions—New Bond Street is far from behindhand in the race. There the ring of critics, music-sellers, publishers, and contractors drive a roaring trade, much after the manner of the Jewish master-tailors of the ready-made trade in the East, by importing foreign musicians and singers, tempting them with imaginary tales of enormous gains, and then sweating them *ad libitum* until their slender means are entirely exhausted.

If they are poor and of mediocre talent the contractors fatten upon their labour by the simple process of charging them for their "appearances" instead of remunerating their services. Should they, however, gradually succeed in winning the public favour, and are by that means able to break from their task-masters' toils by securing their own appointments direct, the game is up, and the rascals have no choice but to hunt other victims. Unhappy foreign bandsmen suffer most of all. Invariably let out to customers for two guineas a day, five shillings to seven and sixpence is the utmost that falls to their own lot, while the remaining thirty-five shillings or so per head is pocketed by the contractor who generally continues to fatten upon them, until at length, stung to desperation, the foreign musician makes a bold bid for freedom, and heads a party of fellow-sufferers, who exact from fresh paymasters a more equitable salary at first hand. Another favourite trick by which the New Bond Street gentry bring "grist to the mill" is the system of publishing new songs, of uncertain popularity and elusive value, marking them four shillings, to be sold according to demand as low as two shillings and costing a shilling or even less to the trade, thereby easily enabling music-masters and mistresses to cheat their pupils to the extent of three and four hundred per cent.—while on the other hand, by the simple device of taking the entire output of the few really popular song-writers in advance and so monopolising their produce, they can afford to unify or bring up in value the entire stock of rubbish which is thrown at their heads for little or nothing, and deceive the public at the same time by an adroit use of Press criticism, into paying the music publishers the same exorbitant figure for what they themselves get for next to nothing, or, in the case of amateurs, *literally get paid for accepting*.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### UNEMPLOYED

WHILE I write, a mass of unemployed will hold a meeting in Hyde Park and endeavour to arouse the sympathies of the cockneys by a procession through the principal London streets. Their leaders do not hesitate to declare that they place the utmost reliance upon the formidable show they expect to make not only by numbers, but by their aggressive and quasi-military bearing, a point which has been strongly impressed upon them as forming an important lever for obtaining the end they propose: and it is an open secret that, despairing and disgusted with the attitude of the Government in their regard, they see no remedy except what must be extorted by the fears rather than the sympathy of their fellow-countrymen.

Few countries have done more to create for themselves an unemployed question. No doubt it exists among all countries to a more or less extent. Our inheritance, however, dates from fully three hundred years ago when we allowed a selfish and rapacious king, under the lying pretext of sparing Parliament any further demands or requisitions, to put into his own purse and expend for his own selfish pleasures, the funds which may well be described as our national assurance against poverty, misfortune, and pauperism. Up to the time King Harry devoured the lesser, and subsequently the greater Abbeys and later the Hospitals and Chantries of England, the religious bodies who possessed and governed these beneficent institutions were not only particularly adapted for watching the ragged fringe of labour and healing the wounds that disease or loss of the head of the household inflicted upon families within the ambit of their jurisdiction, but besides, were able and willing to devote certain sums entrusted to them by kind benefactors in helping the deserving poor, lifting them up when they had fallen by the way, assisting deserving widows to rear their families when deprived of their husbands, and performing in short the part of Providence in sustaining those whom calamity

or disease prevented from gaining a livelihood. More than this, the system of tenure adopted in most of the large conventual establishments, consisting as it did of part service and part rent, was admirably adapted for those who were unfitted to enter the general competition of labour, by misfortune, ill-health, or exceptionally large families, and who, if not assisted by occasional help, would surely fall on a downward path, to swell the army of paupers which we now begin to look upon as a national institution. The result of this confiscation was very soon visible. As early as Edward VI. it was found necessary to seize the able-bodied men ejected from the abbey lands and wandering homeless about the country, and through laws expressly enabling to this end, hand them over to anyone who was willing to give them the coarsest food in exchange for their labour, chaining them, if necessary, to prevent their escape, and in all ways treating them as convicts rather than free men, and lastly, providing the severe punishment of being branded with the letter "V" on the forehead, upon their recapture after attempting to escape.

Later, in the time of Elizabeth, we hear that so many thousands assembled in the neighbourhood of London and gave themselves up to robbery, etc., from the inability to obtain work, that it is noted in the Chronicles of the times that her Royal Highness commented severely upon the laxity and negligence of the Lord Chief Justice to abate the nuisance, and insisted upon his taking steps at once to put an end to the disorder. Finding, however, that hanging did not abate the nuisance, it was ordered, in the earliest poor law passed in Queen Elizabeth's reign, that each unemployed working man if found outside his own parish should be reconducted there and a rate should be levied upon the parish to which he belonged to maintain him at the public expense. Thus the first pinch of the national shoe was detected within fifty years after the Reformation, when the curse of pauperism descended upon the land for the first time, and substituted for private charity the stern economic regulations of the workhouse and the vestry; and when it was too late to retrieve the past it was perceived that a burden would be cast upon the workers of the land for ever to maintain, willy nilly, the suffering or failing members of the community.



Subsequently a more humane, but probably a still more injudicious treatment was adopted towards those whose only crime was to be unable to earn their bread. Marriages were not only permitted but encouraged: with the result that pauperism multiplied and increased till at the beginning of the nineteenth century considerably over a million or something like a twentieth of the entire population were supported by public bounty. Numerous emendations of the poor law have been attempted since that time. The public feeling has vacillated between extreme indulgence and extreme severity. But upon the whole it may be said that, owing to the increased prosperity of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the advance of medical knowledge or the greater abundance of places intervening between rough labour and comparative sinecures such as caretakers' places and so on—it is certain that a large diminution has taken place, relatively with the increase of the population, of late years: though partly from a decrease of prices and partly from the keen competition of foreign trade, the taint of pauperism which has prevailed during three centuries in what may be called the ragged fringe of the ranks of labour, has recently developed a condition of things which must be termed acute.

The unemployed consist mainly of four classes. Those who are unable to obtain work, those who cannot work, and those who spend their lives in avoiding work, and merely make a pretence of looking for work to hide their real intentions of prowling in search of public assistance or private charity; among which may be included the entire army of tramps who, owing to the growing sentiment or leniency of legislation which is the curse of the Anglo-Saxon race is fast proving a serious drain upon industry in England, the English colonies and the United States.

Lastly, there are those who from either taint of disease or ill-health, inebriety or misfortune, are either unable to support their families, or if single, are unable to do a full day's work.

The next question which arises, and one which has repeatedly perplexed our Parliament is this: To whom shall these men be made chargeable? Are they to be relieved to some extent by national effort, that is, out of the exchequer funds, or should they be dealt with as the paupers of old were, by the parish where they were born?

Manifestly the growing weakness or good nature which has enabled, nay facilitated, vagrancy in a high degree under the pretext of enabling the labourer to seek work wherever it can be found, has not only promoted that tramping habit which is one of the evils from which we suffer, but it has also largely encouraged the influx into towns and brought about the double evil of depriving the country of the workers it requires, and of laying a heavy burden upon the ratepayers of the great towns. Again, it is clear that so long as crowds of unemployed shall obtain, or believe they can obtain, assistance from the fears or sympathy of Government, there will be no decrease in their numbers or any probability of a diminution of their source of supply; whereas if their relief were declared to be upon the shoulders of the parish or the greater authorities (such as county councils) of the areas which produce them, there would thus be a strong stimulus to such authorities of either providing them with work or doing their best to prevent them falling into the ranks of the unemployed. These remarks must be held to apply almost entirely to the first and second categories of unemployed people, since the third division should rather be treated as criminals of a secondary class, analogous to the reformatory type among boys, and subjected to such discipline as will be likely to restore them to the condition of useful members of the community.

Little or nothing can be done until, as I have before frequently remarked in the course of this work, an uniform system of Registration is adopted by which the local authorities and the police will be enabled to learn through their registers the place of origin, and within certain limits the life history, of every individual in the realm. Public offices under Government supervision should be opened in various quarters of London and other principal towns of the United Kingdom where a list would be kept of the available labour and the character and suitability of the applicants defined (where employers would naturally resort), and by carefully-prepared lists, the labour managers would be able to form a correct estimate of the balance between the workers and the current demands for labour. The condition of the labour market would then be notified to the police, who would in turn warn off those who flocked into London under the pretext of a genuine desire of employment, taking their names

and ascertaining the truth or otherwise of their story and making it thereby impossible for an indefinite body of men to allege that they remain out of work from being no longer required by their employers or from shrinkage of employment or cessation of manufacture, short time, etc., which are the usual grounds urged at present in behalf of the genuineness of the existing deficiency. No doubt in an immense town like London the difficulty is greatly increased of ascertaining within positive limits the power of absorption of labour, and its relative activity according to the season of the year. At all events an effective step would thus be taken in the direction of a correct ascertainment of the truth or otherwise of the allegation that has been made of late that there is a large shrinkage in the demand of labour, and a long stride would be taken in the direction of classification of the ranks of which it is composed.

With regard to the remaining division of semi-criminal individuals, nothing short of a parliamentary statute will suffice, enabling public bodies to seize and segregate all those who are known to depend exclusively upon public bounty and cannot show that they have done work during the preceding year. Such men should not only be deprived of their vote (as they are in this country), but (as abroad) should be committed by the magistrate for at least three years to a labour farm, which might be usefully brought into being by the county and borough councils, and its subjects released from such farms only when they prove themselves able and willing to earn their own livelihood: lastly, all private charity should be placed under heavy penalty, and all tramps or mendicants punished with the utmost severity, without which all system of relief or punishment would be rendered nugatory.

As to drunkards, of late years Englishmen have gradually come to believe (which has long been the case in other lands), that whether drunkenness is regarded as a form of madness or a criminal offence, enforced separation from society, and in extreme cases deprivation of all civil rights combined with strictest discipline, is the only method which is either effectual, or reasonably fair to the rest of the community.

There remain those who, by misfortune or ill-health, or loss of the head of the family, being reduced in circumstances, fall

upon a downward path from which they find it difficult to raise themselves and are thus condemned to casual labour by having been obliged to pawn all their furniture or even possibly lost their home. Here it would seem that the Government could, as has been done in Italy and France, through the agency of boards consisting partly of charitable people, and partly of members nominated by the Government administering charitable funds derived from all sources, establish Government Pawnshops where the fullest economic value is given on the articles deposited, since no profit is required as is the case when such operations are left to private speculators. No better object of charity can be devised than extending a helping hand, and upon due inquiry advancing such sums as shall be deemed necessary to set a deserving man upon his legs, or help a struggling family to tide over their difficulties.

It will be perhaps said, in the system adopted by General Booth, which has proved an exceedingly useful if expensive means of utilizing casual labour upon farms or factories for the production of certain articles of common use, that no compulsion, such as is here shadowed, has been found necessary. This, however, is a popular mistake. For though General Booth has not been entrusted by any special powers by any Act of Parliament, he is well known to provide with great care and acumen that everyone who commits himself to his care and casts in his lot with his army, abandons the privileges of liberty, for the mild and beneficent, if autocratic, rule of the Salvation Army.

#### OUR MILITARY AND NAVAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

Closely allied to Empire, and directly flowing as a consequence therefrom, is the question of our military and naval establishment, which, it is needless to say, has emulated the "leaps and bounds" of Mr. Gladstone's celebrated commercial dithyramb. Time was, when, upon the Marshal of England setting up his array in the counties, and the lieutenant calling those who were liable to take up arms in a war with France, every man that could muster the arms required for service would flock to the standard of his feudal chief and start out for a three months' campaign as if for a summer's holiday. Since, however,

our German rulers, in order to secure themselves against the unpopularity and dislike of the people, surrounded themselves with paid mercenaries, which, gradually creeping up in numbers, came to serve all the purposes of State defence—patriotism, in the sense of a practical spirit of self-sacrifice for one's country, has nearly died out from among us. For so strange is the constitution of human beings, that if you do but take away the incentive to practise, and the purpose of a virtue, virtue will soon take wings unto itself and fly away. Just as a passion grows by what it feeds on, so the elementary innate passion for possession, and retention of that possession at all hazards when gained, coupled with a certain ferocity and aggressiveness, backed by not a little pride, go to constitute the all-important virtue of patriotism, which once faded away is as impossible to revive as the last rose of summer.

We are told more must be made of the army, "teach our youth to respect the red coat," "let more be made of it in the high places." All such ideas are entirely mistaken. They come of a misapprehension and confusion between cause and effect, a contempt of human nature and a belief in the omnipotence of favour and patronage, which lies at the root of so many of our national mistakes. The tendency of patriotism, deeply rooted as it is in human nature in the early stages of its progress, is like all other primitive passions, apt to wax and wane. While it is acquiring dominion, fighting with the enemy that surrounds it, and keeping them desperately at bay by the stoutest exertion of self-sacrifice, passion, is maintained at red heat: but just as a fierce mastiff, whom when half-starved it is dangerous to approach as he crunches his plateful of bones glowering around with a distrustful and suspicious eye—but when fattened and pampered with abundant meals, lolls in his kennel with placid mien encouraging the advance of every passing stranger—so a nation gorged with empire, pampered with wealth, and softened with comfort, loses sight of all peril to a State which it has long been taught to regard as impregnable, and waxing day by day more cosmopolitan and good-tempered, welcomes instead of eyeing suspiciously the stranger 'at his gate and refuses to listen to danger or rumours of war, treating them as the vain cry of foolish alarmists.

Another deep-seated human weakness is, that what we gain easily we value not. Where each youth is trained to arms, or possibly compelled by sumptuary laws, as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to spend high days and holidays in perfecting himself to bear his part in defending his hearth and home, having thus the necessities of his country and the endangerment of his own welfare forced upon his notice day by day, he is not only kept alert and watchful by that very vigilance which he is compelled to exert, but the fire of his patriotism is kept alight, causing his entire nature to glow with a fervour and enthusiasm which lies at the bottom of all great enterprises and virtues. So true is this, that the mother who entrusts the care of her children to a hireling in order that she may be free for the pleasures and exacting requirements of fashionable life, rapidly blunts the maternal instinct in her own breast, and ceases to care for the children towards whom she feels no obligation and acknowledges no duty: while in the heart of the struggling mother whose life is a continued series of self-sacrifice and self-denial, and who painfully rears her offspring, giving her life-blood like the pelican to afford them sustenance and existence, there burns a fire that prosperity cannot quench or sorrow and misfortune extinguish.

The volunteer movement, which went far to cause the glowing embers of patriotism in England to burn up with a fierce light under the terrors of a French invasion, undisturbed through sixty years of prosperity by so much as a cloud or even shadow of invasion, has slowly but surely brought down the temperature of England's patriotism to its lowest ebb. With what result, the sad tale of the Boer War—which, if the naked truth be told, caused the might of England before the attacks of a patriotic handful of farmers to tremble in the balance—is there to show; and while plan after plan and scheme after scheme were hurriedly and nervously pressed upon the country's attention scarce four years after that imminent catastrophe was upon us, we find the public interest entirely centred upon whether the Liberals or the free-fooders or the fiscal reformers shall prevail in a three-cornered fight.

One fact, if no other, has clearly stood forth among the babel of tongues and the contradictory counsels which have been flung

upon our rulers with such abundant vehemence during the past three years, and that is, that no party in the State, and no section of any class is willing to make that sacrifice of universal military service on behalf of its country, which forms the common lot of the rest of humanity. It is true England is willing to build untold ships and expend fabulous sums, more or less judiciously, in order to guard her island home from attack—seemingly oblivious of the fact that this novel policy, of shirking national defence by the people and through the people as practised in other lands, mainly proceeded from the policy of isolation and complete reliance on our island position, which culminated in the indifference and laconic spirit of the Manchester school.

I would go further and declare that this deliberately adopted system (which could only occur to a nation of shopkeepers) to set aside, in lieu of the arms and hearts and sinews of her people as a bulwark against the enemy, so many millions as an assurance against untoward accidents, forms part of that commercial canker which eats into our national life, and which, if an antidote is not provided, will infallibly corrode the vitality of the nation and bring about that decadence, which from similar causes reduced Imperial Rome to be the prey of barbarians.

And here, again, is it stupidity, or that insanity that announces premature decay, which impels us open-eyed to advance gaily on the path of acquisition and gather an ever-increasing burden of conquest and obligations, while deliberately clinging to the methods which were considered in bygone days to secure sufficiently our freedom from attack, by reason of our special advantages of isolation and our consequent indifference to the quarrels and dissensions of our Continental neighbours? For, in the first place, when such ideas were rife the fatal objections to the feasibility of such a system did not exist. We were still a nation self-maintaining and self-maintained. No crippled, half-alive community were we then, as now, unable to maintain itself without the help of foreign support. Nor, on the other hand, was it possible to land a hostile army on our shores within the space of an hour. But even if the most sanguine calculations upon which we rest our immunity from attack were beyond all suspicion, with our new aspirations for Empire, it is not only our island home and our commerce which

we must defend, but with our ever-growing and increasing trade and the jealousies which gather about it, we must be prepared at any moment, not only with one fleet to land an army on any given point of attack, but at the same time to maintain our own communications with another fleet in order to keep us from starvation, and operate at the uttermost ends of the earth with a third. In the face of all this, with our usual improvidence we have run wildly into this novel scheme of unlimited Empire first suggested by a renegade Jew, who clapped a paper crown upon the late lamented Queen Victoria wherewith to tickle the vanity of the Indian princes—subsequently allowing ourselves to be further inflamed by the cajolery of a disappointed colonial minister—while we neither possess the machinery for imperial administration, nor have the forethought to make such terms with our colonies as to secure their co-operation and support (financial or commercial), and, to crown all, instead of putting our house in order and setting ourselves to knit together the bonds of Empire, so that from a “paper” it shall be converted into a real and lasting Empire, we allow ourselves to be drawn into a fruitless and unending controversy as to whether this or that colony can be induced to tighten the Imperial bond by this or that commercial bribe, *after having carefully divested ourselves of all power and authority in their regard, and of any lever which can serve to inspire our negotiators with reasonable hopes of success!*



## CHAPTER XL

### OUR OWN TONGUE

THERE is no more glaring national instance of want of forethought and slovenly stupidity than our neglect of our own tongue, which, however mongrel of origin, has been hallowed and reborn by the genius of a Spenser, a Milton, and a Shakespeare. Besides, as Touchstone said of his rustic love, "'tis an ill-favour'd thing, sir, but my own."

Setting aside all question of intrinsic or literary merit, every true lover of his country cannot but desire that the pure fount of English as we read it in the Bible, should be preserved untainted and undefiled.

Here however as usual, what every Englishman (so far as can be discovered) privately scouts and denounces is more often than not precisely the public policy of the country. Contrary to the usage of every civilised land, "Go as you please" is here as elsewhere the only rule. No standard, no reform, no tribunal of appeal as abroad, has ever been demanded or attempted, with the natural result that our language is at the mercy of every vulgarian and the sport of every conceited innovator. In a former chapter I have glanced at Americanese, which bids fair by its popularity and annual output to swamp in time the mother tongue entirely, but I cannot also forbear to raise a protesting voice against desultory or partial spelling-reforms, especially by amateurs, without any effective attempt at the same time to replace the numberless losses sustained in the course of the last four centuries through the carelessness of the greater number and the foolish vanity of the few. For it must be generally admitted that by far the greater of our losses occurred not so much of late years when so many authors have done good service in bringing back good old early words into circulation, but during the days of the Tudors, when novelty and quaintness of speech born of the new learning drove numberless common words out of fashion and supplanted them with foreign equivalents. Each Latinist in those days just as now in French

and German, must needs display his learning by latinising as best he knew. Then other would-be literary fops would naturally compete, with even less knowledge than their model producing still more disastrous results: while it goes without saying that the fools without any Latin at all would be the very first to adopt the new-born mongrel, instead of the good old English equivalent, and then as now would scorn to use any Saxon word of one syllable, where they could possibly substitute one of four. What was the result? Why just as might be expected. The selection of new words being wholly haphazard and governed by no controlling mind, still less subject to any uniform rule, made two-fold havoc of our unhappy tongue by not only introducing Latin and other linguistic equivalents in their longest and most unwieldy form but by driving, as might be expected, their English Congeners into provincial exile, as surely as the Britons sought refuge in the Welsh hills from the tyranny of their Norman invaders.

Hence our tongue bristles with monsters "informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum," which are neither good English nor Latin, and ill compare with the words they were brought in to replace, whose only merits are their syllabic length and greater pomposity, and whose very sound sets the true Latinist's teeth on edge. On the top of these comes the flood of American coinage, with their craving for more and ever more adulteration and novel reduplication. Thus even "to place" (villainous Latin English for "to set"), bad as in the best it is, must needs become "to locate" in Yankee mouths, while their atrocious habit of verbalising nouns ad libitum may be said to render grammar superfluous. Thus, a loan, to loan, a house, to house, a station, to station, a dog, to dog, a bag, to bag, a scythe, to scythe, a voice, to voice, etc., etc. It needs but to carry this practice to its logical conclusion to transform our tongue completely, and while simplifying it into an universal language to be "picked up in a week," such antics must surely rob it of all variety and beauty.

It would be long to show all the hideous adaptations of foreign words which have crept into our tongue, of which the most offensive are those where the English verb is wrought out of the gerund or past participle or any other verbal form that

comes handy, as if it was a matter of entire indifference, providing the general style of the word accords with the average type.

That custom has so dulled the edge of our taste here as in everything else that is English, I am free to confess, but that educated men like Thomas Carlyle and others should coin and adopt, for example, the verbal adjective "cultured" as an improvement upon "cultivated," which in its turn is an atrocious but all too common elongation of the true word "cultivate," is a mystery that I am at a loss to solve.

Most true it is that owing to our haphazard method of word-annexation, words like "to cultivate," or as our American cousins might say "to culture," are far from uncommon. Pleasant as it is to see in the works of "nice" scholars such as Sir Thomas More a determined attempt to train our Anglo-Latin 'imports' into a creditable form, we have to content ourselves amid a tangle of exasperating abortions, with an occasional true born adjective like "cultivate and situate," which our American cousins insist on converting into verbs.

None but a hopelessly stupid people would calmly acquiesce year by year to see their tongue killed by inches, and what is worse, welcome as eagerly the inflow of the scum of all nations into their language, as they do the refuse of the earth into their homes and cities.

They would surely, like their neighbours, have opened the ball by establishing a Tribunal like the Sorbonne at least 200 years ago, when our spelling, which was generally the most constant blunder of the greater number, began to crystallize into a constant form: or failing a tribunal, they would have laboured for unity of speech and accent and endeavoured to (1) determine what was good English, and what was not; (2) how words should be spelled so as to represent their sound in the plainest manner without doing undue violence to their origin; (3) eliminating all mongrels, unnecessary foreign words, and correcting, where required, the form of Latin and other "imports," in accord with common sense and grammar.

The result of this neglect is absolute chaos, a hotch-pot of "nonsequitur's," and absurdities in meaning and pronunciation, a legacy of years of useless labour to our children in learning to spell what has generally no reason for its being, and more

often than not is no guide to its proper pronunciation, and in conning fantastic Latin or Greek words of barbaric construction, which have no excuse for their introduction, and have only served to oust better Saxon equivalents.

Again, in most civilised lands, it is recognised that the use of writing is to set down words so that the reader can at once gather the correct sound from the spelling.

In Spain, France, Germany and Italy, the student upon learning to spell learns to speak properly, and conversely, by learning to speak properly, he spells correctly. With our unhappy children, the case is far different. Spelling is no help to right reading, nor is even right reading easier than any other department of learning, since in many cases correct pronunciation is alternative and optional, and accent a matter of taste or opinion. Thus a child's best years are in England devoted to Spelling—which has no sense or value or relation with its origin, and is no help to pronunciation, and consists mainly in the accumulated mis-spellings of successive generations of dunces—and Arithmetic which, owing to our insane clinging to the worst and most barbarous metric codes extant, demands ten times the labour to acquire and when acquired is ten times worse than the dekametric system of our foreign competitors.

Of course I shall be told, "then I suppose you want the 'fonetic nuz' to spread the light amongst Britons?" Certainly not. I see no cause for a radical sweep, but I seek first gradual improvement by the avoidance of obvious follies like plough for plow or though for tho', through for thru', etc., and I plead strongly for the removal of all senseless stumbling blocks, such as scheme, schedule, sceptic, architect, etc., which have their equivalent (whether "Chi" or "Kappa" in the Greek) in the English K and consequently have no conceivable excuse for being spelt otherwise than with a K. Only a vandal and a fool combined, would suggest the idiotic substitution for Latin nouns in "tion" of "shun"; (1) because it obliterates the Latin origin; and (2) because it is no easier or shorter to write than its predecessor.

Next a scientific committee might surely decide among the many ancient mis-spellings of Saxon words, what form represents best its sound and where possible adopt it, and among the Latin

words retain the most suitable forms like, *e.g.* to construe, imbrue, receve (all these congeners, deceve, conceive, beleve should be reduced to their simple sound, since there is no rhyme or reason in their variations unless to puzzle children withal), and when this is done common sense would easily suggest a more complete uniformity between spelling and sound without violence to origin, even if we had to *abolish*, or add "fire," to "grate" in order to restore a "gret tung" in the eyes of the world.

## CHAPTER XLI

### PRIMOGENITURE AND OTHER LAWS

THE French and other European nations who have adopted the Napoleonic Code have committed the folly of disestablishing human nature by laws that have the double drawback of, firstly, compelling parents to divide their goods and property equally among their children instead of handing down the chiefdom of the family to their first-born son as is the natural instinct of man since the days of Abraham, and, secondly, of scattering human acquisitions, so as to deprive them of that sense of "permanent possession" which is the chief incentive to effort and improvement.

Nevertheless, while these measures were adopted in the mistaken interest of a selfish State, which dreaded prosperity in the subject and adopted the Tarquinian system of cutting off the heads of all those who rose above their fellows, a safety valve for human affection and ambition was still provided, which enabled the parent to legally confer an extra quarter of his goods upon the child of his choice, or, in fact, to make "an eldest son" in a qualified degree.

We English, on the other hand, rushing into the opposite exaggeration have erected Primogeniture like Free Trade into a kind of national religion, and one equally fertile of vast evils to the nation. We have committed the astounding folly at the bidding of a selfish landocracy of not only calling in the law to compel the fulfilment of a natural human tendency by handing over (where no will has been made) all the "real estate" of a deceased person to his next heir male, but we enable the owners of landed estate to call in the law (through entails) to establish permanence of property in a given family, and thus literally, to insure the possessor against the consequences of his own imprudence or folly: Frenchmen, therefore, while very generally deploring the policy which tends to scatter paternal lands, and more and more to diminish the size of their holdings, when apprised of our position in regard to land legislation, are filled

with amazement that a people who have shaken themselves free from the domination of a selfish aristocracy nearly a hundred years ago, should still tolerate so immoral a compact, and one so prejudicial to the public weal.

For what measure strikes more deeply at the root of paternal authority than the law of entail, which places the eldest son in a position of complete independence of his father's will and control, if it does not set up a rivalry and jealousy which leads to mutual suspicion and aversion.

Nor can a father thus situate exercise that control to which he is naturally entitled, so long as his eldest son knows that however bad his conduct, and however undeserving of his inheritance he may be, his father is barred from exercising his just discretion in replacing the unworthy son for a more worthy, or otherwise vindicating the just rights confirmed to him by the highest sanctions human and divine.

No doubt the admirable Settled Estates Act of Lord Chancellor Cairns has gone far to mitigate the hardships and more unjust features of the Entail system, but the principle of customary, if not compulsory Primogeniture is still there, and nothing but a strong popular current setting against the vicious principle of compulsory Primogeniture and the public sanction of private immorality, will suffice entirely to purge the nation of one of its most pregnant evils.

Again, from a national point of view, can anything be more detrimental to our highest national interests, and in short, more stupid, than to allow the law to step in and prevent the possessor or heir of entailed estates from paying the price of his own folly or incompetence. Clearly the tendency of Entail is to agglomerate land into as few hands as possible. Now, all experience has proved that the highest political security of a nation, as well as its agricultural prosperity, depends upon the wide distribution of the land. To this belief our own rulers have themselves given a complete adhesion, as witness the legislation of the past quarter of a century. Nevertheless, with a determined pig-headedness, which can only be surpassed by our Fiscal, Excise, and Colonial policy, we continue year by year to obstruct the beneficent operation of economic laws which, but for the law of entail, would automatically break up overlarge estates and throw

landed property into the market with greater plenty and frequency.

Time was when the foolish but oft-quoted adage as to the utility of keeping up the "fine old families" might have had some weight in this connection. But where are they now? when each peer, once "of high degree," hastens to barter his coronet, or blue blood, if any, for a Yankee heiress, or a City directorship, and instead of living like a gentleman upon his ancestral domain exalting his humbler neighbours to a higher plane of refinement by the bright beams of his presence and hospitality, prefers to make town his headquarters, from whence he can "motor" out to his "shoots" or week-end parties, or take the Sud express to Nice as fancy or weather may suggest.

As to those unhappy beings (chiefly dukes and things) whom the law of entail has encumbered with a dozen or more palatial residences, since "Noblesse" no more "oblige," and consequently in this vulgar age the possessors of such superfluities, especially if Scotch, are reduced to being mere professional lodginghouse-keepers for a living, there can surely be no adequate reason for preserving these hardworking, if familiar landmarks, at the expense of the national well-being.

#### PARTY GOVERNMENT *v.* AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE.

The same tale may be told in slightly altered language of our agricultural methods.

Each one of us, as he sees what is done in Belgium, France, Italy and Germany and Austria, and the enormous strides made by them in these departments mainly at the instigation of their Governments who labour unceasingly by precept, encouragement, and example, to wean their people from following up the old ruts and to guide their energies into the new paths suggested by science, marvels at the backwardness and antiquated processes of our people who follow the same systems and (machinery excepted) cling to the same methods as their grandfathers before them, regardless of the changing world outside. And yet nothing is done. We still go on wondering and writing about it as before, and where all are agreed that something must be done—do nothing.



Whereas Prussia gives seeds gratis to the possessors of waste lands, and ransacks the globe to discover new ways and inducements to landowners to bring the entire fatherland under cultivation or profitable uses—we, on the other hand, place, through our wise and “antick” (?) laws, every obstacle in the way of reclamation, plantations, and home colonisation, by the retention of vague prehistoric Crown Rights, obsolete Common Public Uses, and preposterous Jack-in-office rural “building authorities,” with their red tape and pettifoggery at every turn.

In short, why need we marvel at all, when by a brief study of the purposes and functions of “Government” abroad and “Government” at home, we easily discover that so far from being concerned in the general well-being of the people at large and the advancement of national designs, our government, thanks to that “party” system which is our bane, is almost entirely concerned, to the exclusion of all else, in maintaining itself in power and keeping “the other side” out.

“But does your Government not bestir itself at all in furthering national interests, in fostering trade and agriculture, in developing or husbanding its resources, in lessening the pressure of foreign competition and pointing out the teachings of modern science?” cries the bewildered foreigner as he lands upon our shores. Certainly not. Its progress, or rather proceedings, backwards or forwards, as the case may be, are purely determined by the tactics of the “Opposition” and the demands of the supporters whom it cannot afford to ignore. It takes no initiative, but always squats, like a timid hare in a fallow, in the safest spot where it is least likely to be disturbed: it trembles at every sound, and avoids taking any step whatever except upon absolute compulsion, dreading alike friend and foe. Having no policy or principle except avoiding toil and trouble, it naturally does nothing until frightened into it by outside pressure which it deems more dangerous to resist than to conciliate. In short, the only safe thing to predict about an English Government is, that whatever it may do or not do, it will certainly not abolish a single abuse, remove a blot, repair a scandal, or diminish by a penny the national expenditure while its supporters can derive any benefit from their continuance.

But there is yet another lamentable evil about our party

system. Since the chief aim of the party in power is not to make good laws or help the country, but to keep the other side out and avoid as far as possible making good the pledges upon the faith of which they have been elected, their leader is necessarily a "Dodger," not a Statesman. Hence Scotchmen have always been in great request for such purposes. As far back as my memory goes, "Dodgers" were always in power. "*Old Pam*," Dizzy, Gladstone, Rosebery, Salisbury, Balfour, are all Dodgers first and foremost, though with other qualities, it must be admitted besides—with perhaps the exception of the first two.

But worse remains. When once the "side" have got used to their leader's ways, and have agreed that he is the best Dodger in their crew, according to a well-known British idiosyncrasy, be it fidelity, stupidity or obstinacy, they vow as they do about their boot or gun makers or tailors, that he is the "only man who can keep the party together!" Therefore, once Head Dodger, always Head Dodger. What is the result? I will give an instance in point. Englishmen generally like plain dealing and hate prevarication. They could not swallow Lord Rosebery, and they cannot stand Mr. Balfour's sophistries about Free Trade. But why did they make such a *volte face*? Simply because thousands of anti-Radicals voted "Liberal" to get rid of Mr. Balfour and his pernicious tail. Had the Tories "shunted" and disavowed their old Cabinet and Head Dodger, there can be no question that their party would be in now. Everybody foresaw this, everybody knew what would happen. But all the King's horses, it seems, and all the King's men cannot dislodge Messrs. Balfour and Chamberlain or divorce them from Tory Leadership. Is it pigheadedness of party, or mere British stupidity? I pause for a reply.

## CHAPTER XLII

### OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE example of the corruption and sensuality of the idle rich blazoned forth in a hundred daily newspapers through the land—the lying and grossly exaggerated pictures of their life and habits on the stage, and in the novels and cheap literature of the day, can hardly fail to affect the rising generation. It may be that the Court and higher circles at the Restoration, or under the Regency, produced a ranker crop of debauchery and corruption than is known to the present age—but in those days, at any rate, there were no eager social scavengers and omnipresent reporters as now to dish up the last gossip or scandal for the morning papers, where all who run may read. Consequently the canker of a dissolute Court and a debauched King was happily confined to a small area, and its echoes scarcely penetrated the immediate circles which surrounded them. In these days, however, through the curse of the universal Press, there is nothing hidden, nothing sacred, nothing secret. A young lady will scarcely think it worth her while to elope with her lover nowadays, unless she has been suspected beforehand and properly “interviewed,” so as to make sure that her misbehaviour will be duly discussed in the evening newspapers; while most boys and girls in the land, before they reach the age of fourteen or fifteen are usually indoctrinated by current plays, comic or “Society” papers and magazines, into a condition of revolting cynicism and disbelief in the existence of all goodness, honesty and truth, which, to judge by past chronicles, can never have been equalled in our history. It has been well said that examples are worth a dozen theories, and, while it would be easy to adduce a hundred explanations of the concurrent causes, and show that no other result could possibly flow from admitted premises—it would seem that no better mode of driving my lesson home can be devised than by quoting suitable examples. Here are two samples taken at random from lower and upper class life. (At a Police Court)

“ Surely your honour knows that a girl may be keeping company with a man without being engaged to him ? ”

Here we have a simple confession of plain straightforward contempt (or ignorance) of the difference between right and wrong, between that which beseems and that which shames a modest woman—that speaks volumes to the thinking mind! She sees, in common with thousands of her sex and age in Anglo-Saxondom, at home and over seas, so little harm in assuming the relations of an engaged couple out of sheer sport or idleness—that she waxes indignant that any one should credit her with honourable intentions and the conduct becoming a maid. Go all over the Continent, from St. Petersburg to Seville, or Sicily to Drontjem—though there you may find the bad and the good as elsewhere.—I greatly doubt if you will find a girl whose natural modesty is so seared by habit and custom, as not only to own to the practice, but above all to see no shame in it.

We have heard too the plaintive wail from a carefully-educated young lady of 18 apparently reared amid rustic and old-fashioned surroundings whose natural modesty has not yet been worn away by social friction, who confides to the editress of a popular girls' magazine “ her grief on discovering that most of the nicest young men of her acquaintance are in the habit of kissing the young ladies they met,” and, moreover, “ that the young girls of her set habitually allow themselves to be kissed by men to whom they were in no special degree attached, without the remotest idea of marrying them.” That there is much truth in the assertion none will be prepared to deny. How far we are to attribute this to the general relaxation of morals—beginning at the top and spreading gradually to the lower strata—or to the universal example, precept and solicitations of plays, newspapers or novels, or the increase of American imitation leading to greater intersexual freedom, combined with a marked and growing independence and distaste for parental control, or the decline of positive religion bringing in its train that flippancy and frivolity which is the note of the age; or, again, the flabbiness of public opinion, or a combination of all these things—it may be safely said that no graver evil can exist—or one more sure to sap the nation's strength and introduce the seeds of national decay in a more insidious form.

For—despite the sympathetic editress, who vainly attempts in her answer to the aforesaid wail, to still the maiden's grief and pour balm into her soul with sophisms and irrelevant platitudes. "that would make angels weep"—none can surely doubt that the maid who lets a man kiss her in secret without betrothal is no better than a potential harlot—deceive herself as she will. Nay, worse. For the painted harlot, whom she affects to despise—betrayed perchance by a perfidious scoundrel, and reduced to a mode of life from which her nature abhors, has at least the excuse of misfortune and necessity—while the girl who without the overwhelming, and in a sense ennobling sentiment of passion, surrenders her lips to the first comer who evokes a passing sense of animal enjoyment, not only disgraces her sex, but most assuredly when detected meets with swift retribution in the loathing and contempt of her male and female companions. All men and most women, nay Divinity itself, cannot forbear to look compassionately upon the excesses of the passionate soul who gives up all for the man she loves, but for those who disgrace their womanhood and drag their names through the mud for a pastime, there never was and never will be either mercy or toleration.

I will not dwell more upon the smart ladies seated semi-nude, as if on show, at public dinner-tables, and in the stalls of theatre or opera-house—who might be supposed by a charitable onlooker to be paid by the management to attract the idle and dissolute by a parade of their charms—since it would be vain to expect reformation where shamelessness is become ingrained and inveterate: but I would entreat every lover of his country to read what foreigners, aye, and Americans, too, in their healthier and uncorrupted days, have said and written about English women and their attire, and if then he remains indifferent to their sarcasm, and sees no shame that our English matrons disrobe their unwilling daughters to attract husbands, as in old Babylon, let him at least cease to be surprised that the gilded youth of Britain too, is beginning, along with his modern habits of self-indulgence and effeminacy, to regard womankind from an Oriental standpoint.

Can we wonder, when our modern dandy can scarcely get through his breakfast in time for a late meet—and thinks foxes and hounds—grouse and pheasants—must be manipulated in

such a way as to concentrate his "sport" (as he still has the assurance to call it) so that he can be sure of a hot corner or two, or a fast gallop, and motor back to a late lunch and bridge—that he should decline, after "doing himself well" at Claridge's or the Bachelors', to exert himself to entertain young ladies, still less to "fag round" a ball-room with them, "in a Turkish bath, don't yer know," when he can stretch himself out on an easy-chair and smoke a strong cigar, and sip his coffee in the conservatory, with some "ripping" girls around him to prevent him from being bored?

No doubt it is difficult to banish in a generation the accumulated effects of two generations of Oriental self-indulgence in our men, and of waning self-respect in our women. Nor need we go as far back among our rulers as Charles II. with his royal harem to discover the fatal facility with which English women can accommodate themselves to royal standards, and copy royal models! Most assuredly unless pride comes to the rescue of our countrywomen, and the boys and girls of the rising generation are reined in with a sharper bit and led by a healthier example than heretofore, the sooner we frankly adopt Eastern habits and keep the girls out of the boys' way until marriage, the more likely we shall be to avert our national downfall. Pride and religion are the efficient safeguards of free-born women in a free country. But where royal fashions hold omnipotent sway, and Eastern habits and views have taken root—deeproot in the classes who are most copied—there is no remedy but to clear off the whole crop and replant on a fresh system—or, in other words, if we cannot save the present, let us take measures to save the generations to come.

## CHAPTER XLIII

PANEM ET CIRCENSES—SPORTS OF THE IDLE RICH—OUR EMPIRE  
UP TO DATE—ARMY—GOLF—POLICE

LIKE the old Romans in their decay, we are abandoning the time-honoured rural sports of which we hear and read so much in bygone days—for “panem et circenses.” The modern youth, especially of the lower ranks, “takes it easy.” His ideal of sport is a good seat at a football or cricket match and a packet of Woodbines.

The well-read foreigner, who explores our beautiful land, invariably exclaims, “But your village greens, your football and your cricket of which we hear so much, I see them not, etc.” “’Tis true, ’tis pity; pity ’tis ’tis true.” Gone are the informal rural matches of married *v.* unmarried, and the Saturday evening football or wrestling matches in which the stout youths were wont to show their prowess before the rustic maidens and old folk of the village, who sapiently discussed the “points” of their rival champions as if the affairs of the nation hung in the balance. Gone the old tables before the alehouse where the rural “con-script fathers” settled the politics of the village over a pot of real old English malt and hops—“*rara avis in terris.*” A run to town, or a cheap ticket to the nearest “gate meeting” or music-hall is more to the taste of the modern yokel, and in all this—it must be confessed—he is only following the lead of those above him in the social scale. For, just as simple tastes, views and habits are alike tabooed in fashionable circles—and everything “bores” that does not “excite,” and, above all, cost money—so in the lower ranks, the fever of the Stock Exchange, the race-course, the gas-light flare, and the full-flavoured advertisements lure our unfledged rural youth with 10,000 horse-power from the bower’d cottage and the sweet lanes of country life to the roaring streets and unknown joys of our modern Babylon.

Well has it been said that it is not “allotments” or “small holdings,” or even “Parish Councils” that will keep our youth upon the land. In imitation of our Anglo-Saxon cousins over

the water, with our country youth as with our country gentry, the fever of restlessness, of speculation, of dissipation and change has entered our blood. A state-maintained circus or music-hall would do more than a thousand beneficial devices. But how long would it avail ?

Our wiseacres in Parliament tell us that the labouring classes have a right to a living wage whether they earn it or not, and John Burns glories openly in the House in having carried out useless public works by means of the "unemployed" in diverse parts of the country, at higher than current wages out of the taxpayers' pockets! Is not this "Panem et Circenses"? We pay the idle "ransom," to keep them from "agitation," which means unpleasant discoveries. Surely the obvious duty of enormously overpaid amateur ministers such as ours, whose only qualification is a plausible tongue, is to prove their sympathy for the unemployed, if real, by contributing, not the hard-earned taxes of the industrious community, but a proportion of their own bloated *salaries and allowances* which swell the budget to such a colossal and disastrous figure!

#### SPORTS OF THE IDLE RICH.

And as for the idle rich, what of their sport? See their gymkanas, surely as pitiful a sample of combined imbecility, with a minimum of sport and a plentiful lack of invention, as can well be conceived.

Go to Ranelagh and Hurlingham. See the young ladies and gentlemen twisting their unhappy ponies with a snaffle bit and a rein in each hand, like a butcher boy behind time with his meat, twirling round posts in trap or on horseback like children playing "chairs." Or see them at polo, as they call it, save the mark! (better call it pull-oh!) tugging at the bleeding or callous mouths of their miserable hacks, or whacking their devoted shins instead of the ball, with the same cruel and senseless snaffle and two-handed style of misequitation. "But," says our foreign critic, "is this the far-famed Britannic importation from the East; is this their boasted superiority in riding and driving that we hear so much about?"

The same old story, the same weary tale! We never tire



rummaging the world for novelty in sport and yet cannot discern our own powers or gauge our own capacity. Your Englishman is unequalled "on the flat" or "over a country," but put him on a charger, a park hack or an Arab pony, he is a fish out of water. Yet just as he is unable to gauge or perceive the exceptional beauties of his own unrivalled Tudor and Jacobean architecture, his old world gardens, his "rosbif" *au naturel*, and his high class native cuisine, so he must needs dabble in Italian villas and mock-Versailles and rake the Continent for incompetent scullions of every nation who rob and poison us at their own sweet wills.

So, too, John Bull must needs disport himself on the nearest approach to an Arab pony in the Eastern game of polo, while he is totally devoid of any of the suppleness or corporal graces which qualify the Rajput for that fascinating and elegant amusement. As for pigeon shooting, while only crack-brained sentimentalists can carp at its cruelty, so long as covert-shooting which involves the same slaughter with far greater animal suffering flourishes in our midst, enough to say that only a very low type of the human family can conceivably spend his days in so trivial and monotonous a pursuit; and were it not for *auri sacra fames*, it is not improbable that the chief pursuit of Hurlingham in its palmy days would be numbered among the things that were.

Englishmen of former days were closely copied by would-be "horsy" foreigners since the days of *Egalité d'Orleans*, over 100 years ago. Even yet the flavour still clings to us, and your Boyard or provincial Pole still marvels when he comes to England that we do not disport at the counter or on change the leather breeches and top boots with which the sporting prints of the Regency have made him familiar. Still more now-a-days does your horsey Austrian or Frenchman, while greatly struck with the smartness and skill of our hansom drivers, marvel at the plentiful lack of good driving and slovenly equipages which each year become a more marked feature of our London streets! Where, alas! the tall big-limbed barouche horses of seventeen hands, which Howden and Lincoln fairs turned out by the hundred for the London "season." Where, too, the square-built upright coachman on his lofty perch with upright whip, and light but strong hand, turning them hither and thither

through the dense traffic with a confident smile on his face as if it were the easiest task in the world? Why, where our coal is gone to be sure, to the discerning foreigners, who, having cleared out all our best mares, come to gibe at our nakedness.

Compare our Lifeguards or Scots greys chargers with, not a picked, but an average French, Austrian or Piedmontese regiment of cavalry, and see the difference. Are the former intended for use, or ornament, for tittuping in the Row, or riding across a difficult country? Or is it possible (as the dealers will tell you) that they are expressly selected for their length of legs and back (the two worst defects a charger can possess) so as to show off their dyed sheepskins and varied accoutrements to greater advantage! Shades of Julius Cæsar! It has then come to this, that our crack cavalry regiments pay high prices for animated towel-horses, with uniform colour and unimpeachable tails, without any thought beyond their appearance in the London streets and their presumable effect upon the Cocknies of both sexes. As for our modern drivers, with their legs tucked under them like tailors, and a hand on each rein, we shall soon have to resort to Paris for our smart private coachmen, or get them off hansoms or omnibuses where alone decent coachmanship remains to be found. Whether it is that the twentieth-century youth will not condescend to *learn*, or since the decay of coaching the "*School*" has died out, all that can be safely said is, that the British coachman is as dead as the dodo, and unless the few remaining true-lovers of horses bestir themselves to found an Academy of Coachmanship, the sooner he converts himself into a stoker, as many do, and makes way for a more competent horseman from other countries, the better it will be for man and horse in this once most Philippic land.

One word more on

#### OUR EMPIRE UP TO DATE.

Our present craze is Empire. *We have no empire*—except India, which, won by the sword, is being slowly but surely smothered by the toga (or red tape) of our prefects. We are well aware that for nearly a century she has been governed by "John Company" entirely in their own selfish interest, and that she hates us as ever Spain or Numidia hated her old Roman masters. Yet

we play fast and loose with India as with Ireland. Instead of either treating her as a conquered nation to be ruled as we her conquerors see fit, or, on the other hand, setting ourselves to content her, and after duly educating her people politically by a gradual concession of rights, allowing her as soon as we are satisfied of her attachment to our rule, to work out her own destiny—as usual, we do neither, but vacillate between the two policies, blowing now hot, now cold; at one moment encouraging her Press to free agitation and her youth to aspire to a share in her government, at another treating her with the greatest harshness and contumely.

As for the rest of our Colonial possessions they are either self-governing or on the road to become such, and in no sense contribute to our strength, wealth or security, or, in short, either to realise the idea or fact of Empire in any degree; and yet, strangely enough, while imagining ourselves to be a practical people, the collapse of the Imperial machinery and the costly awakening which too surely proclaimed the hazardous strain of the Boer War upon England's resources, has rather, under the skilfully applied red herrings drawn across our path by the astute engineer of this latest Imperial blunder, served to increase than to damp the ardour of British Imperialism. We had hardly recovered from the stunning blows dealt upon our army, our credit, our pseudo-imperial management, and our pockets, than with a truly British generosity which does more credit to our hearts than our heads, we are ready and willing to join in a pæan of thanksgiving to our gallant Colonial troops, at the bidding and suggestion of a certain machiavellian ex-Colonial Minister, and bless our stars for being able to rely on such an Empire, such fellow-Imperialists, and, above all, such a Colonial Minister, in our hour of need.

But even if we had these loosely-linked and scattered possessions, which we dignify by the name of Empire on our own terms, or rather if we had foreseen three centuries ago the Imperial "boom" of Messrs. d'Israeli and Chamberlain and their followers commonly known as Jingoese, and so prepared our relations with them as to have in them a real power and mutual support, financial, fiscal and military, where we have none whatever—has not History and Experience shown the

world long ago that Democracy and Empire cannot co-exist—that they are mutually antagonistic and destructive. For since Empire requires one will, one eye, one arm, and one ambition, Democracy connotes as many as the fabled Hydra. Add to this our Party Government, in itself a galaxy of divergent purposes and changing orders, and it must be confessed that unless by a miracle of self-immolation on the part of our Colonial partners no approach to a workable Empire can be devised or imagined.

If these scattered parts were homogeneous, or even of like disposition and circumstances, and more closely grouped about the parent body, there might be a hope of Federation or Conjunction for mutual purposes of defence, fiscal freedom, and trade benefit, with adequate representation in a Federal Diet or an Inter-Colonial Council for general purposes affecting a common policy ; but “ Empire,” which supposes direct use and control of the parts of the Empire for its own behoof, as applied to our case, is a foolish dream, a fairy tale to soothe political babes withal, which can neither be realised or seriously discussed except in relation to Hindustan and her dependencies.

Nor is it at all likely that such a Federation for commercial, military, naval, and fiscal purposes would be entered into without common terms of equality among the members or parts, which would be incompatible with monarchical forms, and would almost certainly require them to be recast upon a Republican model.

My main purpose here, however, in referring again to this subject is to draw my reader’s attention to the national temper, of which this new Imperial fever is the symptom.

It is all part of the same craving for foreign novelty, for display, for superficial childish show, born of a new and most un-English distrust of ourselves, and our powers. We are losing faith in our own destiny. We are no longer content to be free-men of England, we want to “ run ” an Empire, more upstart and certainly far more unreal than that of the brand new Empires of Germany or Russia. With empire our newly-acquired characteristics seem to be entirely at variance. For, an empire to be successful, needs unity of aim, of policy and action. Democracy breeds diversity, and each man or section fights for his

own hand. Democracy begets selfishness and frivolity, since the State's care is everybody's care, and patriotism soon withers upon such soil. No Empire can long subsist without being supported by self-sacrifice and patriotism, and such high sentiments are only inspired by the loyal devotion or admiration of a worthy ruler, deep set in the hearts of his subjects.

Finally, Empire, possessing one head, presents to the people a definite ideal, while Democracy, being all heads, presents none. Moreover, where there is not a definite ideal and a visible head, the overwhelming mass of human beings will feel no sense of patriotism, and love of country will become among them a mere platform metaphor.

To return to our army, surely no more lamentable symptom of the age can there be than to shirk one's country's defence which to every properly constituted mind is not so much a duty as a delight. The happy conditions of our island home render foreign service unnecessary. Let us continue our voluntary system for foreign service, but if our patriotism and good sense neither sees the advantage nor necessity of training up all our youth without exception to a state of thorough military efficiency so that they may at least in repelling invasion be able to rival the capacity and gallantry of our late enemy in South Africa, then indeed we no longer deserve the name of freemen, and shall only have ourselves to thank if we become the prey of the first marauding adventurer with an army and navy at his back.

From this consideration we pass naturally to

#### OUR ARMY.

An Empire constitutes a perpetual challenge to the Nations. It virtually proclaims to the nations its own transient success in grabbing more lands than its neighbours—and having usually no more right to such possessions than any other power—is at once a cause of jealousy and envy to its less fortunate neighbours. In order to exist then, it must be ever ready to fight in defence of those coveted possessions, and to fight effectually, it must sacrifice its sons and treasure. Are we prepared to do either? and, if not, why not? Because we are eaten up with luxury. The last two generations have

known no serious war to try our metal and bring out our latent good qualities, and the past fifty years has been a period of unexampled prosperity. Comfort is now our only god, and enjoyment, distractions, and amusement, our summum bonum. "Why 'fag' at mimic war, as Etonians say, when we are never likely to be attacked. If you want drill and like it, why take the shilling at once and be joyful! It was all very well in the 60's, when Napoleon III. was looking about for someone to quarrel with—but we are all right now—and can afford to pay for a good army, without playing at volunteers!" Do we not hear this or similar speeches constantly? Not so, however, was the language of the gallant bands who left the loom and the plough to trail a pike behind the Black Prince in France and Spain. Not so spoke the bowmen of Craven who avenged the defeat of Bannockburn on the field of Flodden. As the gallant Switzers to this hour—mindful of their ancient strife for liberty on many a hard fought field—still love to spend their hours of leisure from toil and business in drilling and rifle practice; alas, our degenerate youth, no longer as of yore delight in waging mimic war on village green and common with cricket, hockey or football, or other manly contentious games, but prefer a shilling seat and a packet of Woodbines at a football or cricket match, while our gilded youth lounge in their luxurious motors or fill the luxurious deck chairs of their steam yachts at Cowes, or "do a round" of golf.

#### GOLF! INDEED!

How typical of our age of luxury and ease! A game for elderly Scotchmen to smoke and gossip over in friendly pairs or fours—known to Englishmen for three centuries—suddenly fills so fully the demands of a lazy and frivolous age, that it is not an uncommon thing to hear of steady fathers of families and able-bodied young men, too, who spend their lives going round the country from links to links, driving with a long stick a small white ball over purposely constructed banks and ditches, deeming their labour and time well spent if they succeed in "going round" in less time than their fellows! Its main characteristics of extreme selfishness and aggressiveness, fitting so closely as it

does to the newer motor craze now so rife, must surely indicate a prevailing symptom of our age. No breezy moor is safe, no people's park sacred from the all-devouring "goffer." He takes a deal of room, rides roughshod over all and sundry, ousts cricket and football by his bloated bribes, swaggers as if our little island was meant for nothing else but to make links out of, in short, he is as widely objectionable as a "chauffeur" or an Orangeman!

### OUR POLICE.

Police is a kind of home army for private consumption, and is akin in its methods and ills to the British Army, inasmuch as the former proclaims us to be a purse-proud and unpatriotic, and the latter a stupid and short-sighted race who place every legal obstacle in the way of detection of crime—shelter, nay invite, the ruffians of every land by our hospitable but fatal laws, and not content with fostering an extensive breed of foot-tramps of our own are now importing yearly thousands of still more dangerous motor-driving tramps (usually the offscourings of foreign prisons) and through the action of our newspapers, impelled thereto by the insatiable curiosity of the public, we usually contrive to hamper so effectually the investigation of crime that an escaped murderer at large, or a popular railway assassin, has only to invest a half-penny in the *Daily Mail* to learn precisely what course it is safe to pursue in order to baffle his pursuers.

And as it is with the papers, so it is with everything else. We and our American cousins have become of late so inquisitive and frivolous—possibly through too much newspaper feeding, since Shakespeare tells us "appetite grows by what it feeds on"—that it would seem that we really prefer to be amused than to detect or abate crime. That many get to love a noted assassin, and that a much-be-printed swindler earns popular admiration we have the most certain evidence; and if we had it not, we might guess as much by the ink shed over him. For it must be that not only the profane vulgar, but the governing minority as well, sympathize with the ruffian as against the police, or they would never take so much pains to give the former the advantage over the latter by preventing any rational measures being adopted for due registration of our

own people, and the close scrutiny and inscription of foreigners coming to our shores by exacting strict police-returns from all hotels and lodging houses, while they kindly furnish an additional inducement to malefactors by our closed unpatrolled railway carriages and the total absence of any system for checking, registering or safe-guarding travellers' baggage.

And now comes the crucial question. Are we to acquiesce to this state of things, and treat them, as we are all too prone to do, as things that are engrained in our habits and which it is hopeless to extirpate. Surely a counsel of despair and one boding ill for the future of our nation ; for while there is life there is hope, and only where the national life burns low and the springs of a people energy's are quenched in despotism or sunk in Oriental listlessness, should a free nation confess its impotence to reform its own admitted errors. Let us shake off our apathy and recollect in the light of the experience of the great democracies of Greece and Rome, that not chains and rods alone go to make up the slavery of a people. Far worse than all these are the slavery of the mind, the will, and the passions. While we surrender our minds to the dictates of a self-seeking and corrupt Press, our will to the guidance of interested politicians, and the demands of a phantom Fashion which has no reality or substance and is but the reflection of our own folly and fears, or open-eyed make a god of comfort and luxury—forgetting alike our duty to God, country and family—rending one another at the bidding of designing priests who have sundered us into a hundred warring sects for their own selfish ends—how can we stand before the nations and say we are truly free !

If there is exaggeration in what I have written, or if I am the victim of hallucinations which have no foundation excepting my own disordered brain, let my readers be my judges. I will stand or fall by their verdict. But if the small still voice within tells them that I have said nothing that any dare deny, or if in doubt may not verify, then once more I entreat my beloved countrymen and women, while it is yet time, to ponder on the trend of Anglo-Saxon habits, and to consider if all is well with us. All history tell us there is in the lives of peoples, as of men, a moment which determines once for all their upward or downward directions. Let us above all be English-



men and women once again. Let us try to *be*, not to *seem*. Let us gauge our own forward or backward progress, if you will, by a comparison with our foreign neighbours and, above all, in the light of past history—since, however it may be true of the material world, it is certain that man's nature has ever been and will be the same till the crack of doom: nor let us be unmindful of foreign criticism, for where there is much smoke there must surely be some fire; above all, let us cultivate, as did our mid-Asiatic ancestors, the sense of Duty in our children to God, country and family—in short, Respect, Patriotism and Discipline—and if it is hopeless to entirely break off all relations with Goddess Fashion, at all events, let us teach them the dignity of life, that they may be proud of being free Englishmen and Christians with a will of their own to mar or make themselves withal, not mere pawns in the game at the mercy of designing priests, lawyers, pressmen and politicians.

Thus, fashion once scotched, English men and women would once more dare to live their own simple natural lives instead of being bad cosmopolitan mimics: Cant would die out amongst us for want of sustenance, and Insincerity for want of motive for pretending to be what we are not. Then should we be no longer the slaves of fashion and foolish prejudice and habit, the obedient victims and humble servants of venal scribblers and politicians. We should chase the filthy crew of mongrel foreigners, cooks, dressmakers, hairdressers, musicians and "chauffeurs," who devour our wealth and denationalise us by making us ashamed of working out our own destiny in our own way. Let us for heaven's sake have our own cookery, and let its improvement be a national concern instead of striving in vain to import or acclimatize inferior foreign imitations. Let us have our own distinctive dress and hair styles, and only employ our own English workmen. Let us rebuild our old national renown for music by fostering English talent—accounting it a disgrace to let our own music and musicians starve, while we fatten all the musical offscourings and impostors of the world.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### OUR STATE CLERGY AND THEIR DOCTRINE OF "CONTINUITY"

FEW things surprise the well-informed foreigner so much as the devious and Jesuitical ways of our national clergy.

He says, "How is it, that they are on the one hand, like the other Lutheran bodies, ever railing at "Rome" and "*Romisch*" practices (betraying thus their German origin all too surely)—and on the other hand loudly protesting that they changed nothing at the "Reformation, and are precisely the same Church in every respect as before."

Now as I have found even Englishmen express the same surprise at the tactics of the parsons, and endeavour to explain the anomaly by the intestinal dissensions of that amiable body, whose mutual jealousy is such that it suffices for Low Churchmen to assert that the moon is made of cheese, for the High to vow it's made of chalk—I think it will not be found amiss if I venture here on a brief statement of the Anglican financial-political position. It will serve, I think, to drive home my strictures against our public ideas of honesty and sincerity which will give even John Bull's tough conscience a twinge.

The Nonconformists and Dissenters generally, together with Atheists, Jews and Unbelievers (euphemistically called Agnostics) believe that they collectively amount to considerably more than one-half of Englishmen, and see no logical reason why the Law-made Church should monopolise the entire Church wealth of the nation. But such is their profound distrust in the honesty and sincerity of their fellow-citizens in general and of their own co-religionists, apparently, in particular, that they are ever loath to put the question to the test by adopting the usual means of a Religious Census, as is the way of other civilised nations. Upon careful enquiry it would seem that hypocrisy and insincerity is so engrained in British nature that it is not uncommon for men, especially in the minor towns and villages, to profess adherence to the Establishment, and even attend Church to please their employers or gain favour in the eyes of the omnipotent parson or squire of the parish, while they secretly sing Psalms on a Sunday night

as in the days of persecution at the particular Bethel of their predilection, where Jack is as good as his master, and any tinker or cobbler, with the "gift of the gab," may aspire to be a judge in Israel.

Two things here must strike the least observant. What must be the servility and baseness of these trucklers, to sink so low as this; and what the bigotry of squire and parson where such subterfuges are held expedient; and finally, how great the insincerity of all alike: that of the labourers, in order to gain their bread, and worse still that of the employers, who while vowing on platform, in Press, and lecture-hall the most liberal sentiments, are even now, at this hour, as ready and willing to persecute those who differ from them, as ever were their blood-thirsty predecessors of bygone days.

When the first knell of the one-sided Church was sounded in the House of Commons, the parsons, under the vigorous and astute leadership of Archbishop Benson, who typified in his methods and person the ideal Jesuit of the penny dreadful, quite unmindful of the good old copy-book heading that "Honesty is the best policy," started an amusing if effective "joss," as Westerners say, upon the British proletariat.

They seem to have conceived such a lofty, and to my mind not undeserved opinion of the fair-mindedness of the working-classes in whose hands their fate lies, that they resolved by fair means or foul to convince them that the present Parliament-established Church and Religion are actually identical in every respect with the Church and Religion of Magna Charta, and that consequently their Church is not only rightfully possessed of all her immense wealth, but that she derived them from a period antecedent to the very existence of Parliament!

They, therefore, began by inventing the doctrine of "Continuity," and quite forgetful that, according to the old saw, "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," their theory would be easily discredited by the fact that, of their many Lutheran brethren on the Continent who are precisely in the same boat, none regard it with anything but pity and contempt, they proceeded to flood the entire country and more especially the rural districts where ignorance of history and respect for parsonic authority would tend to favour their grotesque pre-

tensions, with paid and unpaid lecturers and magic-lantern illustrations of the same, and endless teas, with mixed diversions for old and young of both sexes, beginning with the mild Bohea and inevitable bun and as surely terminating with the still more indigestible list of historic falsehoods which form the stock-in-trade of a modern "Church Lecture."

As it may be interesting to the unobservant, it may be well here to place these falsehoods in all their naked ugliness, upon the pillory of historic criticism.

1. The Church of England having existed before the State, by what right can the State resume or deal with the same ?

2. The Church of England is not, as heretofore supposed, 350 or so years old, but thirteen, or even according to some Anglicans fifteen centuries old (*sic*)—apparently oblivious of the fact that the Church, whatever it was, was assuredly not English (or Anglican) before there were any Englishmen in our islands.

3. The Church never having been established, but having grown up independently of the State, cannot be disestablished.

The cloven foot of "Jesuitism" or "sophistry" is here plainly discerned. The phrase "Church of England" is used to mystify and juggle with.

The Church of England founded by Pope Gregory, which was abruptly ended by the "godly motion" of Edward VI. (aged 10) at the bidding of Cranmer and Co., egged on by the abbey and church-robbing landowners, was no doubt older than any Parliament, and if its corporate life as the State Church be carried on through its somewhat erratic British predecessors, the epoch of its birth in the land might be set at the decline of Roman dominion in Britain. But these Anglican and British Churches were undoubtedly established by Popes, and as certainly conformed as far as they could to Roman ritual, liturgy and practise; while "the Church of England of to-day is as surely established by virtue of the statute of Parliament of 2 and 3 Edward VI., as it was thereby cut off from the Church Universal, by the adoption of its Lutheran articles and the abolition of the Roman Mass." It is childish quibbling to say, with Prof. Freeman, because there was no change of names, or offices, or even discipline and liturgy to a large extent—that the post-reform church was identical with the one that it displaced—

seeing that the former was built up upon anti-Roman, and the latter on Roman usage, belief, ritual, and obedience. In short, it is not the form or names of this, or any other body of men, which defines and characterises them, but their faith, their practises, their sources of origin, and authority.

Finally, the legal style of the Church of England is the "Reformed Church as by law established." But this style or definition could not possibly apply to the Ancient Church of Gregory of the sixth century (1) because it was not "reformed" and (2) because it was not "by law established," but rather on the contrary had conduced to establish the law, whereas the reformed religion of Cranmer was indisputably established by 2 and 3 Ed. VI. as witness the statute of the very next year, which refers to it having been "established by law"—! Therefore it follows that the Church of England is *not* the Ancient Church and cannot truly be described by the same name or style.

As to the powers of Parliament, the Parliament of Edward VI. by abolishing the ancient liturgy and providing heavy penalties for "saying Mass," virtually transferred all the churches, cathedrals and chapels (undoubtedly founded and endowed for the celebration of the "Mass") to a set of men who were willing to abandon the Roman Rite and Communion, in order to conform to the terms imposed by Parliament upon parish incumbents. Since, then, Parliament thus ousted the incumbents of the ancient faith by virtue of their novel statutes and replaced them by their own creatures of the new, 350 years ago, how can it be said that Parliament—having already dealt with the national Churchwealth and tithe once, is not at liberty to redivide or reapportion them again to-day?

Nevertheless, such is the collective stupidity of the rank and file upon questions of this kind, that it suffices for the foxes of the establishment who see no other way to preserve their precious monopoly but by hard lying, to repeat such childish fables over and over again, until the geese of their flocks terrified by their pastor's woeful, if imaginary, prognostications, not only swallow wholesale statements which they have neither the leisure to examine, or the sense to verify, but fill the land with their noisy cackling, until even the indifferent are drawn into

the vortex of their dissensions, and take sides in the quarrel, "ut mos est inter Britannos," without knowing or caring two pins about the matter.

As often happens, however, in religion as well as in politics, the truth is generally to be found, by conning the ravings of all parties and extracting a common denominator.

The extreme Ritualist calls himself a "Churchman," though he usually rejects all the changes of the Reformation except, perhaps, the Lutheran belief in private judgment. To him who as a stickler for Catholic precedent desperately strives to find a period in past Church history to suit his purpose, it is life or death to prove that the "Church of England" underwent no organic alteration at the Reformation, and flourished far into the heyday of papal opposition of the fourth and fifth centuries, so that he may discover examples and a state of things similar to his own.

The Low Churchman contradicts the latter flatly in every particular, and grumbles because the Reformation did not go far enough. He not only glories in the abolition of a central sacrifice (the Mass) at the Reformation, but sighs for the Geneva gowns, and movable tables instead of altars of the sixteenth century, being in cordial agreement with Bishop Ridley of glorious memory, who most truly said that "a priest doth import an altar and an altar a sacrifice," and therefore condemned the whole priestly business from first to last. There remains the Broad Churchman who usually regards Ritualists as harmless lunatics, and ridicules alike his childish millinery and his apish Catholic pretensions. Frankly ascribing his origin, in common with his Low Church friends, to the sixteenth century, and heartily thankful that the state of the Reformation freed him from papal domination, the Roman Mass, and the chains of priestly authority—he thanks Cranmer for having put us out of the Catholic Church, and Luther for proclaiming to all Christians the liberty to read whatever religion they please out of the Bible. So far from desiring, or rather pretending to desire, union with "our separated brethren" abroad—he generally regards uniformity as a proof of want of originality, and unity of faith as a sign of narrowmindedness, and of an unprogressive form of religious belief.

## CHAPTER XLV

### BRITISH RELIGIOUS REFORM

AN overwhelming majority of this country are professed Christians. Nevertheless, recent events show that not only Christian concord amongst us is as far off as ever, but that we prefer our sectarian bickerings to the welfare of our school children. The champions of these sects, without exception, will unblushingly assert in pulpit or lecture hall, that each and all of their Christian varieties were founded in the purest interests of truth upon the Divine Word as revealed in the Gospel, while everyone who is well informed, or cares to examine their origin, will plainly see that they were all invented by ambitious or cantankerous priests or both, who being unable to get promotion in their respective churches, took a short cut to command and public favour by heading a new sect.

The paramount Christian sect in this country, itself a sect of the Ancient Church of the Realm—despite the discreditable attempts of Dr. Benson and his followers with Professor Freeman's aid to prove that it is precisely the same national church as existed before the Reformation—would never have had its new forms and articles of creed thrust upon it had it not been for royal exigencies, Cranmerian intrigues, and a futile political attempt to effect a compromise into which it was hoped all Christian dissidents would ultimately be forced by fair means or foul. Considering, therefore, the total want of success which attended these manoeuvres, and the terribly antisocial and un-Christian results from which we grievously suffer to this hour, the thought must arise in every thinking mind, would it not now be possible to do what a sincere ruler might possibly have attempted with success 400 years ago when the New Learning first disposed men's minds to closer religious criticism, and by an united resolve to sink trivial differences, strike out a common level of Christian Belief and Ritual which would satisfy alike the consciences of the earnest members of all our Christian sects and still be sufficiently consonant with Catholic usage as to procure our affiliation and intercommunion with the central Church of Peter at Rome?

From historical analogy it seems highly probable, more especially in the light of the letters which passed between Henry VIII. and Clement, that an influential representation which should have satisfied the Curia of Rome that the majority of earnest English and German Churchmen were as firmly resolved upon reasonable reforms as they were at the Synod of Dort (where they met and effected a tolerably amicable religious settlement), and if, further, Henry VIII. and Charles V. had lent the movement their powerful support, that the Pope would have found means to induce his Cardinals to draw in their horns very considerably, and to take up a widely different attitude from that which they subsequently assumed at the Council of Trent, where the new party of internal reform had neither fair play nor a chance of making their voice effectually heard. Nor can there be any doubt that were it not for the accidental difficulties of bringing about a union of Christian churches, then as now, from the jars and jealousies, national spite, and royal antipathies, and above all the ferocious passions and theologic hate of clerics threatened with extinction, the main objections to the old pre-reformation religion such as celibacy of clergy, auricular confession, a Latin liturgy, and whether or no Communicants regarded Communion as a Commemoration Act or a real consumption of the body and blood of Christ (which was optional until a majority at the Council of Trent declared in favour of the latter opinion) there would have been no schism at all. As for the smaller fry of indulgences, images, medals, scapulars, relicks, holy water, pilgrimages, and such minor matters about which so much stir was made at the Reformation by the Northern nations—and which are nothing more than pious habits appealing to the warmer hearts and more demonstrative and ardent temperament of the Southern races, at first tolerated and at last consecrated by use as helps to devotion, but which to the more cold and critical eye of the Northern races savour of profanity and idolatry—the concessions continually made to various bodies of Christians who have subsequently been reconciled or affiliated to the Holy See, retaining their own liturgy, language and ritual, amply prove that all that is required to gain admittance into the wide portals of the Catholic fold is a firm stand, a solid faith, and a united front. Obviously there are some preliminaries



to be overcome. It is very difficult to regard as anything but moral and rational suicide the act into which the Church Universal by political stress was hurried at Trent, in dubbing itself a sect by changing its style into the "Roman Catholic Apostolical Church," instead of the Church Catholic (or universal), the object of which was to convey to the Mistress Church of Rome the direct domination of all the other affiliated national churches by fusing them into one, and at the same time reducing to subjection the heads of the various national churches by the curtailment of their independence and jurisdiction. Still less can we accept the specious explanation of theologians, that they merely "consolidated" the Catholic Church by the simple process of substituting for the time-honoured "Primacy" of the Pope, an entirely novel claim first put forward in the thirteenth century, of supremacy and immediate jurisdiction over all the churches of the world! "Quos deus vult perdere prius dementat," sang the old Roman poet. It is certainly remarkable that at the same unlucky Council the unchecked vanity of the Pontiff and his autocratic minions, should have similarly taken advantage of the weakness or dissensions of the northern nations of Europe to discontinue the practice of admitting the various Christian nationalities to an equal participation in the election of popes, with the natural result that from that time not only no non-Italian Popes have been chosen, but the Curia of Rome, as if to emphasize the radical change in the constitution as well as in the title of the Church since that date, has sedulously spread abroad among the faithful the absurd notion that Italians being born diplomatists (I had almost said dodgers) *were the most qualified to rule the Church of Christ.*

Surely a strange view of the functions of the Vicar of Christ upon earth! more especially when one reflects upon the oft-repeated boast that "her enemies shall never prevail against her," and that "the Holy Spirit shall abide with her for ever," involving the necessary corollary that the Holy Ghost makes Himself responsible for Papal elections. Yet while each Pontiff in turn is solemnly declared to have been selected by special favour of the Holy Ghost, each Pope in turn exhibits his mistrust in Providence by filling the College with Italian Cardinals, being apparently of the same opinion as the immortal "Red Comyn" — "A'll mak sikker."

Thus scarcely had the Roman Pontiffs—regardless of aught but their increased authority—effected a radical change in the character of the Catholic Church, by converting a group of national churches in union with the Apostolic, or Roman Church (which, as the See of Peter, always held an undisputed primacy among Christian Churches) into one Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church under the supremacy and direct jurisdiction of the Pope—when they must needs do their best to depose it from its proud title of Universal, by changing it into an Italian Church! For how can a Church be properly said to be Universal, when not only its Government but its Governor is Italian? Nor are the consequences that flow from these “administrative departures” less disquieting and revolutionary. For if the Catholic Church is virtually Roman, *i.e.* Italian—the national Churches, which are parts thereof, must necessarily be likewise Italian and consequently foreign—and if directly subject to Rome, as they have been since the “Tridentine Consolidation” (!) their bishops and priests are not only divided in jurisdiction and allegiance between their civil and religious capacity, but must frequently be exposed to the most grave and perplexing difficulties.

There remains the terrible stumbling-block of Papal Infallibility, which again at first view seems to be expressly invented in order to debar all outsiders from scaling its Church walls, and to break off once for all with all terrestrial notions of reason and proportion. Yet when it is regarded in its theologic aspect there seems to be some “method in its madness,” inasmuch as under the reasonable view that (1) she is the one and only fold of Christ, and (2) that the Holy Ghost has ever covenanted to dwell in her and keep her from all error (which said exemption from error has ever been attributed to General Councils)—it is difficult to see why (in that view) the Holy Ghost should not assist as much and as effectually the Pontiff when he in like manner defines matters of faith or morals and publishes the same *urbi et orbi*. Still the *profanum vulgus* is naturally suspicious and thinks that Pontiffs who at one time “consolidate” the European Churches by grasping their supreme direction, and gradually exclude members of their churches from the College of Cardinals so that the Holy Ghost shall have no chance

of providing a non-Italian Pope without a miracle, and finally rid themselves of general councils for good and all, by placing themselves in a supernatural, or at any rate *praeterhuman* category,—well, it savours a little too much of “hanky-panky” to commend itself, at all events “in the flesh,” as St. Paul says, to the sober judgment of matter-of-fact Englishmen. To those, however, who would rashly infer from these events that the Church is—at least since we Northerners abandoned it—a mere gigantic engine of human fraud and imposture, it will be well to ask, if not the true heir of the Church of the Apostles, which is? also to remind them that humanity, being naturally corrupt, ever seeks to debase the noblest institutions and turn them to its own interested purposes. The chosen people, as we read in Holy Writ, often rebelled, and its most trusted leaders forsook their God and worshipped the false gods of the Gentiles, and yet were led back again and again into the straight path.

Again, I insist, if the Church of which Rome is the Central See, and from all time in the East and the West held to be the depository of Apostolic faith and traditions—if she is not the visible Church which Christ came upon earth to establish—the only remaining theory is to contend that He did not foresee the necessity of any human organisation to carry on His teachings after His death—and that Peter, to whom He said, “Feed my lambs—Feed my sheep,” was to appoint no successor!

It seems then reasonable for all who believe in Christ, and that outside His fold there is no salvation, to make every effort to verify His words—“so that there shall be One Fold and One Shepherd.” Such an effort can never be made but by laymen—all history shows that clerics thrive on discord and fatten on dissensions, and that no imaginable terms would ever be likely to satisfy or suit them. My hopes are entirely centred in the devout and reasonable denizens of England, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Norway—bound in a league for joint preliminary consultation and subsequent presentation of their terms not of submission but of federation, upon acceptance of which they would be affiliated to the Apostolic See and admitted to inter-communion with the Church Catholic or Universal precisely as were the pre-Reformation National Churches, reserving alone to the Pope (or, failing satisfaction, to

a General Council) the decision of faith, ritual and liturgy, with possibly an appellate jurisdiction from the Metropolitan Synods in certain determined cases. The times are ripe for such a league as this to succeed. In the first place, while the pseudo-scientific puerilities of Voltaire, and later, of the followers of Darwin, which turned the heads of millions of Christians of a past generation, have faded away and given place to a more general reaction towards Christianity, especially among the cultivated classes, than ever before--there has grown up on the other hand among nearly all well-informed Catholics an impatience of the expansion of devotion in frivolous directions as well as of the petrified formalism of Catholic ritual, coupled with a strong desire to sweep away the numberless accretions of the middle ages, whose childish, if often harmless, usages, ill accord with a more intellectual stage of civilisation.

No doubt there is a wide belief abroad that submission complete and unreserved according to the formula laid down at the Council of Trent must be extorted from every one who desires to be received into the Roman Communion. Nevertheless, the enormous concessions of autonomy in usage, ritual, and liturgy, made by the Curia to large bodies such as the Ruthenians, Copts, Unionists, Armenians, Mosarabes, &c., &c., testify to the elasticity of Rome's portals, when anything approaching to a national Romeward movement claims her attention and sympathy. Above all now when Vatican funds are low and Italy, justly incensed at the protracted animosity of the Vatican which virtually places the Court and Government of Italy under a perpetual religious ban, is slowly but surely feeling her way to a second and final act of spoliation which will probably ere long drive the Pope and his Cardinals to seek refuge in one of the Mediterranean islands—it is not likely that any terms of union would be rejected unless they contain articles which expressly contravene the teachings of the Gospel. The rather should the Churches of Lutheran foundation adopt the course suggested, seeing that their principal prop, the Bible, has been shrewdly shaken and is likely to be even still further discredited under the solvents of critical research.

The strongest arms against Rome were furnished from the Biblical Armoury; and the Reformers, from Luther onwards,

entrenched themselves upon "the Bible, and nothing but the Bible," holding any divergence, real or apparent, from Biblical lore to be an all sufficient disproof of Roman doctrine.

With greater reason then should they now repair to the fountain head of Christian doctrine, for the pure and undefiled source of Revelation which it has ever been the care and office of the Roman Church to preserve and cherish throughout the ages.

Closely knitted up with Party Politics is the discreditable fetish known as the

#### HOUSE OF LORDS.

Like our other fetish, "Free Trade," it has ceased long ago to be what it once was—useful and respectable.

Still it is kept up, in *status quo ante*, to the amazement of the world and the confusion of the realm, through the obstinacy of the Conservatives, whose pet preserve it is, and the stupidity of the greater number of ignorant Britons who have been taught by their Prayer Book, along with their Catechism, to worship a lord. There is no secret—there is nothing mysterious about the House of Lords. When it was a Peerage, consisting of Peers (or equals) in broad acres and ancient lineage, it was exceedingly useful, because their collective dislike to violent changes caused them to taboo risky legislative experiments, while their small numbers tended to intensify their solidarity and pride of place, which, in turn, acted powerfully upon the nation in reinforcing their Esteem and Authority.

But from the moment that Charles II. abolished their feudal rights, and James I. began to sell Peerages, Esteem and Authority rapidly vanished, leaving them legislative power alone, *i.e.* (Anglicè)—something to sell or barter; in short, a vote. Thus they ceased to be a Landed Aristocracy, or a House of Lords, and became a mere Upper House. With the eighteenth century, which may truly be called the Age of Barter and Corruption, when, according to Walpole (who ought to know), "every Briton had his price," and (be it noted) even the "Glorious Revolution," and the Union of Great Britain, and eighty years later, that of Ireland, were bought and sold by "noble lords" like any other vulgar commodity—Party Politics, little by little, swept the entire Upper House into its dirty net. Next Gladstone and

Dizzy, bettering their instruction, and with the full consent of a stupid, party-ridden nation, turned the Peerage into the Beerage. Lucky if it does not shortly earn the title of "Jewry" as well.

What is this Beerage now-a-days? Lawyers, Brewers, Bankers, Jew Financiers, and Manufacturers, who have backed their "party" through thick and thin, or endowed it heavily, or else are worth "buying out" by the other side. Many of them, as all round men of business, are the very men we ought to have had at the head of affairs during the Boer war, who, unfortunately, rarely reach the Upper House until their intellect is waning, and their energy is spent.

Their sons usually revert to the shop-keeping type from which the parental talents have raised them, and lacking the incentive to exertion, imagine their whole duty in life consists in "making the money fly." Finding themselves greatly worshipped by their own relatives and footmen as "my lord," and in great demand with "Society" so long as the money continues to fly as aforesaid, they commonly clinch their aristocratic pretensions by getting a post at Court, marrying a duke's daughter, and ruining themselves on the turf. They are greatly surprised that the old peerage do not welcome them as a man and a brother; and consequently, rarely, if ever, trouble the Upper Chamber with their presence, except on those very rare occasions when the Whip of the side to whom they owe their creation, prevails upon them to "save their country" by voting upon intricate matters of which they know little, and care less.

Is it then surprising that the new Beerage does not "work," and that even John Bull, dull as he is, is beginning to see what all the other civilised nations have discovered for a century or more—namely, that an hereditary aristocracy should be reduced to the smallest possible compass, and heavily diluted with current notables and successful men of business if they are to serve any useful purpose in the State, or command the respect and confidence of reasonable citizens. The cry of the Liberals is, "Let us all be peers, and so capture it for our side—or else do away with it." The Tories exclaim, "Let it alone, we have a majority there, it suits us exactly as it is."

Obviously, in the light of reason and experience, what is really

required is to concentrate its useful elements by allowing the six hundred Peers to elect fifty useful men (if they can) out of their ranks, and, say another hundred part-elected, part-nominated (for life) by the Crown. In most civilised lands, such a similar balance of the hereditary-landed, and the elective or nominative (or both) elements have been found useful and necessary, in order to secure what every reasonable man must hold to be of prime importance—namely, that they shall be a respected and powerful body, which is strong and independent enough to hold the balance between Crown and popular rights, and so guard the country against the dangers of sudden and unprovided popular ebullitions and passions.

#### TEMPERANCE REMEDIES.

With regard to Temperance my remedies are short, sweet, and I believe, perfectly practicable.

Granted that moderate and reasonable entertainment is a desirable boon, the cause of excess in England is traceable to Seclusion and Secrecy—every facility for getting light, sound beer and wines should be provided. Let bars, snuggeries and bar-parlours be abolished, and family frequentation of comfortable and amplified beer saloons be encouraged, where temperance drinks and refreshments are compulsorily on sale. Let municipalities gradually acquire, at a fair price, the public-houses, selling the same to builders, creating 5 per cent. Stock for that end; and when occasion offers build a People's Palace or "Pleasure-house" in some central spot, where cheap concerts, lectures, or a town band might attract, and cheap copies of pictures and statues instruct. There all the displaced brewers might compete in selling their beer to the public, and workmen would bring their families. Publicity would banish drunkenness, and serve to civilise and educate the masses to good behaviour and self-control, and the softening influence of woman would be added to the elevating and restraining tendency of public life. If any one doubts these results let them visit Blackpool or the Isle of Man in August, and they will be abundantly convinced that, given the same conditions of public entertainment, the working masses behave at least as well as the classes who are usually called their superiors.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### CONCLUSION

MY task is done. It remains for my readers to judge if I have spoken ill or well, truly or falsely, of my fellow-countrymen and their failings. At least it can scarcely be denied that we are apt to collectively acquiesce in public follies and blunders which we should scorn to commit in private life and which we never cease individually to denounce and deplore, and that we are prone to rest content under the general imputation of reproaches which we individually abhor.

Which of us is so bold except in sport as to maintain that it is reasonable to elect for a judge the man who has shown most acuteness in deceiving juries, or him who has done best service as a thick and thin supporter of the Government then in power—or that, when thus caught, the best way to secure his permanent good behaviour is to place him irremovably on a pedestal above the breath of criticism or public reproof, thereby encouraging him to indulge every whim or excess to which his temper inclines, or his love of notoriety suggests—or, again, that the best way of presenting a suitor's case to a judge or jury is to filter it through two distinct persons, solicitor and barrister, of whom only one has had the advantage of hearing the original story at first hand? Or which of us in his saner moments will contend that the dekametric system is not superior to our barbarous old system of computing weights, values and measures, and that its compulsory adoption, along with a wide measure of spelling reform, would lighten the school labour of generations to come by one-half, and prove an inestimable boon to the commerce and industry of this country?

In like manner, every reasonable being in England is at one in desiring and even requiring as a measure of national self-preservation that the children of the poorer classes of the towns who, up to 1870, were allowed to grow up like the wild dogs in Constantinople, should be caught up and compulsorily trained in schools like their brethren in the country villages, but demur at



the same being supported by their more provident neighbours, except when orphans, or where from ill-health their parents are wholly incapable of paying their school fees; still less is it palatable to the average taxpayer to contribute vast sums to erect palatial edifices for those whose parents fail to comply with their manifest obligations, or to fatten able-bodied men in comfort upon the rates, or encourage tramps to perambulate the country and provide them with lodgings at the ratepayers' expense.

Similarly, while most Englishmen are in favour of compulsory charity in the shape of a poor rate for the benefit of the helpless indigent, they fail to see why palaces should be erected out of the public rates for housing people who have been accustomed to the straitest circumstances—or see any reason for encouraging the able-bodied pauper to overshadow the land by enabling him to rear large broods at the expense and to the detriment of the long-suffering community who are destined to support and educate them.

Nor does the average Briton usually repine at the religious dissensions which distract the land and render all useful co-operation for moral improvement abortive, regarding, as he does, religion not as abstract truth but as a matter of relative prepossession and inclinations. Yet what Englishman can be singly picked who will admit the justice of conferring on one out of 300 bodies the monopoly of the Church wealth of the nation just because it was established or proposed to be made the one and only Church of the Realm three hundred years ago? and yet, in the next breath, the overwhelming majority of Britons, who are at one in desiring for every child the amplest school facilities for being taught the religion of their parents, calmly endure the preposterous spectacle of the British Parliament vainly endeavouring to bring about that desirable result after a year of incessant strife and bickering, because of the pedantic imbecility of a large number of their representatives, who demur at *public* money being used to support *private* religions.

Nothing outside the land of "Cocagne" or a comic opera, can be more incongruous than for so-called Liberals in one session to disestablish the Irish Church, by bribing the possessors of the illgotten church goods of a disinherited nation to disendow

themselves by endowing them with a larger share of the aforesaid church's goods than they could possibly have obtained by remaining where they were, and in the following session proceed to spend the money left over in helping Irish tenants to buy out their landlords, and a few short years later nailing their colours to the mast and challenging the supremacy of the House of Lords, rather than acquiesce to the iniquitous principle of applying the collective rates of A, B, C and D to the religious instruction of the offspring of W, X, Y, Z, whereby, terrible as it is to contemplate, the sovereign painfully extracted from the reluctant pocket of a low Churchman might conceivably help to pay for the instruction of a Ritualist's child in the very latest novelty of "Anglo-Catholic" doctrine.

I will not pursue the harrowing subject any further, but I cannot forbear remarking that only an exceptional degree of national stupidity can account for wide-spread measures of utility being opposed upon grounds of uniformity and parity, while our statute-book and national usages literally bristle with inconsistencies of every shape and kind.

But if we desire to surpass ourselves and afford the observant foreigner the strangest mystery ever presented to public eye, and stimulate his highest wonderment at our national performances, surely

#### IRELAND

must be placed in the very forefront. *Catholic Ireland*, whom we have oppressed, insulted, betrayed, beaten down, deliberately ruined and handed over to the Protestant garrison (that handful of her hereditary foes who had contrived by legal chicanery or open violence to seize the greater part of the land and all the power), and later out of sheer fright of a rebellion, enfranchised, and reinstated upon an equality with their quondam masters in law polity and religion—thereby carefully placing political weapons in the hands of our former slaves for the express purpose of harrying our native legislators in Parliament and making English and Scotch legislation impossible! But more remains.

Having carefully fixed the "garrison" landlords on the backs of the Catholic majority, and empowered them through one-sided laws of their own making, to ruin their tenantry first, and

themselves after, we suddenly discover towards the end of the nineteenth century that our national treatment of Ireland upon the whole has surpassed in cold-blooded cruelty and perfidy that of Spain in the sixteenth century, or Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth in respect of her Polish and Jewish subjects; so turning right about face! we lay the entire blame of Ireland's past misgovernment and present misfortunes upon the unhappy descendants of the aforesaid Protestant garrison, and conclude, just about one hundred years after the palmy days of croppy-hunting and rapparee-slaughter by the Loyalists, and no questions asked—that the landlords were the curse of Ireland, and must be got rid of at all costs! Well, perhaps they were at one time; but in view of the fact that, a few returns to coercion apart, the Irish Members for the last fifty years have extorted from the fears or folly of their English colleagues, or by a skilful use of their voting powers, almost every concession they asked for or desire without any increase of attachment or gratitude on their side that can be discerned with the naked eye—it is surely little short of madness—firstly, to uproot most of the industry, energy, talent, and intelligence of the country in order, seemingly, to hand it over to the squireens and priests and the representatives of all that is the reverse of progress and industry, until such time as Transatlantic Ireland is rich and strong enough to wrest the country from our grasp, and, secondly, to advance 130 millions for that purpose to men whose undying hatred for six centuries of wrongs and whose love of freedom we can neither appease nor eradicate.

Surely, a more complicated piece of folly was never perpetrated! What madness, after centuries of oppression and misrule, to imagine that a sop of money will secure fidelity from a race nursed up and fed upon hatred of the Saxon oppressor, whose only dream and hope is to gain their independence and “be a nation once again”!

Time was, perhaps, under the more sympathetic regimen of Mr. Gladstone, when a liberal scheme of Autonomy might have softened the heart of Ireland and ended our mutual strife, but the day is long past when a bone thrown to a dog could avert the coming of our just retribution. We have deliberately sowed the wind and must needs reap the whirlwind.

Nor is this the least of the marvel! Had it been a ferocious crew of "sansculottes," drunk with the blood of their old-time masters, and quite overbalanced by their rapid rise from rags to regal power who hurled the Irish landlords from their ancient seats, or ruined and drove them into exile, one would not so much wonder at their violence as deplore their petulant folly—but when one reflects that this astounding leap in the dark is the act of the steady, slowgoing, cautious Tories under the guidance of the cynical author of "Philosophic Doubt," who never had a good word for, or ever attributed any but the blackest motives to Irish Catholics or Nationalists, and on all and every occasion were wont to vow that whatever of honesty, skill, energy, and industry were to be found in all Ireland were to be found in the Protestant or Anglo-Scottish ranks—the wholesale abolition of Protestant landlords and substitution of the English-hating Celts in their room is assuredly the most astonishing plan for preserving the "Union" that it ever entered the mind of man to devise.

And yet if we closely examine John Bull's devious paths in the past, and consider that owing to our plague of party government thousands, perhaps millions, of Englishmen care much more for their party than good government, and as the triumph of the Liberals can only be obtained by offering the public the precise opposite of the Conservative tactics which have occasioned their disgrace, not only no continuity of national policy can be expected, but, were it not for the solid ballast of British aversion to change which is, or was, our saving mark, we should carry out a series of exaggerated revolutions, which would render us even more inexplicable to foreign eyes than we are already.

The plain and undeniable facts are not disputed, that for six centuries—

1. We have conquered, plundered, cheated and oppressed Celtic Ireland without mercy, and placed over them a dominant and long-favoured garrison of Anglo-Scotch race who have seized two-thirds of the land.
2. We have deprived them for three centuries of the means of superior education in order to stifle their religion, and having bought up their leaders, succeeded in cheating them out of their own parliament.

3. When the Liberals were on the very verge of yielding to their just demands, the Conservative and Anglo-Scot majority dashed the cup from their very lips.
4. Then when the Boer war had given us ample proofs of the deep-seated hatred and rancour of the Irish nation towards us, we think it an opportune moment to kick out the Anglo-Scottish garrison and to leave Ireland to the real Irish, making our enemies our creditors for 130 millions.

Unless all past experiences belie and deceive, *the Irish will never rest until they are free*; they will bide their time, till America picks a quarrel with us, or, until their Irish citizens are numerous and influential enough to invade us, or, at all events, make Erin independent. Will Irish tenants then go on paying those rent-charges for which the English taxpayer pledges his present and future substance? It seems more than likely that they will say, "Why not do what the Liberals did for the Irish Church? We are only robbing the robbers and re-entering on our own!"

With not less madness, we prate of Empire, because our adventurous sons have planted flourishing Colonies in divers parts of the world, which, having extorted every condition of self-government and independence unfettered by any obligation or tie on their side, securely rely on our gratuitous protection, until they are strong enough to fly alone and to start a republic of their own in imitation of the United States. Not only did we neglect to bargain for military or naval subsidies in exchange for their autonomy, but we did not even take the precaution of binding our Colonies in an Inter-Colonial Custom League so that we might not only prevent their competition but benefit by their future food production to feed our foodless millions at home on a free trade basis without being forced to depend upon possible foes for subsistence. (Hence Joseph's tardy lament.)

Need reference be made to the ludicrous incongruity of our

*Outcry against Chinese Labour for the Colonies*

and its evil effects, when we seem to have exerted our ingenuity in stocking London for 100 years past with all the objectionable offscourings of Europe; as if, forsooth, lacking a negro population, we must needs mimick our transatlantic

brethren even so far as to get up a Polish Jew "difficulty" in our midst? And to make ourselves still further a laughing stock to Europe, at the very time that one-half of the nation is thundering against Chinese coolie introduction and the other half agitating against the East End being the dumping ground of diseased and homeless Oriental Jews, Anarchists, and destitute aliens of all sorts, "all the King's horses and all the King's men," with all the combined wisdom and wit of our Law and Police, are unavailing to expel a troupe of German gipsy marauders, who have been carefully tended by a numerous escort of sympathetic constables during their prolonged tour through the country, and whose travelling expenses have been thankfully discharged at the cost of a grateful nation.

#### COAL.

*Why do we allow it to be exported ?*

Every one knows (except myself) that coal is our most valuable asset. Personally, I stoutly maintain that it is our greatest curse excepting perhaps our Reformation, or, as I prefer to call it, our Christian Disintegration, for, in my view, it is coal—the "spacious possession" of coal—that has proved our ruin, since it has brought along with "machinery" unnumbered ills upon our people, and while engendering the Anglo-Saxon plague of "millionaires" and all that follows in their wake, has distracted us from the real prosperity of a nation in order to follow the will o' the wisp of industrial progress. It was an ill day when in our land we came to think that all is well where, as Goldsmith sang,—

"Wealth accumulates, and men decay."

Only a stupid people would place, on one hand, her agricultural prosperity in jeopardy, which, after all, *can* be restored, and on the other squander recklessly for the foreigners' advantage her greatest asset, which once gone can never be restored.

Or can there be anything more comic to foreign eyes than our lavish and untrammelled bounty in bestowing the rare gifts of our Smokeless Navy Steam Coal upon our Naval Competitors

throughout the world, and in order that they may not run short of that inestimable treasure when they may chance to declare war upon us, we afford them every facility of buying and leasing the same without impediment, and decline to place even a poor shilling per ton of duty, in order that it may be transferred in ever-increasing quantities into our competitors' hands.

I will not allude again to our crazy attempts to compel our people to be sober by Act of Parliament, except once more to repeat that here, as in a hundred other instances, we have acted with such reckless stupidity in ordering our national existence that we are not only unable to feed ourselves for more than three months in the year, but we cannot afford to be sober for fear of depriving our Government of the means of existence! since a full third of our Revenue depends on our alcoholic consumption.

Here's a pretty fix for a civilised nation! She, open-eyed ruins her own agricultural prospects to please the town artisan and fatten the foreigner; she cannot do right to India because she thrives on opium and the salt tax, and she cannot afford to be temperate for fear the profits of excise should shrink below thirty millions! Was ever Hypocrisy like this? Our Rulers are for ever pretending to deplore our national failing for drink, while they are bound to secretly rejoice at its yearly increase. They do their best to drive us to spirits and maddening or poisonous rye and potato spirits, which it ought to be a crime to sell at all—firstly, because their heaviest profit is derived from the manufacture of such cheap poisons, and secondly, because they penalise and practically keep out of the country the harmless light hocks and clarets of France, Germany and Algeria by charging a duty which doubles their cost to the consumer!

We are at last becoming convinced that there is "something rotten in the State of Denmark." We feel somehow that we ought not to have found the Coercion of the Boers such a very serious and costly matter as to send our Consols down from 108 to 82 and shake our national credit in the markets of the world, unless there was something the matter somewhere. The complaints of waning business and greatly reduced profits

can scarcely be groundless, and the share lists and stock exchange prices point to an enormous reduction of investments, and our almost stationary exports too plainly tell a tale of waning "foreign business," with all but our Colonial brethren. Nevertheless, the calm and prudent Party, the cold-blooded and even-minded Conservatives, who have not the excuse of the Liberals who are ever burning (so they say) to redress wrongs and reform "abuses," cost what it may—but on the contrary glory in "abuses" and thrives upon national wrongs which they invariably maintain to the last gasp—have managed, during their nineteen years of almost unbroken command, with an industry which can hardly be sufficiently admired, to pile up debt upon debt to almost double the annual expenditure of Government, and to bring up the National Debt to nearly its old alarming figure.

And yet at the very same time that they openly repine at the hopelessness of army reform, lament our waning credit, never cease to deplore our stationary exports, the shrinkage in private expenditure, which deeply affects the home retail trade, and our greatly reduced profits on the national turnover, the obvious duty of retrenchment of government expenses seems to be furthest from their thoughts. Some see no remedy for our acknowledged ills but a reversal of our cherished national doctrine of Free Trade, which up to the last few years was supposed to be the cause of all our commercial superiority, and is now suddenly charged with all our backslidings and national misfortunes. Others, chiefly Liberals, disputing the Tory position as in duty bound, prefer to throw the entire blame of our rebuffs in National Commercial Progress upon our notoriously inferior technical schools and national system of education in general, and straightway, instead of providing a well-ordered system of Educative Ascension for the talented poor from village school to Laboratory or Art School as abroad, combined with a thorough reform of Secondary National Schooling, can find nothing better to do during the whole of their first year in power than to air their theological differences and pay off their old religious and educational scores in an aimless and futile sectarian campaign, which left matters just as they were, plus ferocious sectarian



passions roused, time and money wasted, while peace among the sects and children's education are as far off as ever.

#### THE REFORMATION OF POLITICAL AMATEURS.

I shall be told: "As usual with critics, you pull down everything and build up nothing." Keeping firmly in view my text that our stupidity lies in collectively acquiescing in a state of things which we severally, by an enormous majority, condemn—What are our chief complaints?

1. We find that owing to Britons being trained to place their "party" before their country, patriotism is extinct (except in words) among us, and the State, which is ourselves, a thing to be plundered, "*Hinc illae lachrymae.*" Hence all our woes, from Boer Wars to National wastefulness, inclusive.

2. We find that our Members, mostly l'yars, as they say in Lancashire, are all chiefly concerned, firstly, in keeping their seats by humouring their constituents; secondly, in satisfying their "Party Association"; and, thirdly, in truckling to their leaders and his whips. And where does the Country "come in"? Nowhere.

3. From these premises flow directly such follies as Home Rule to a people who collectively declared their disloyalty to the flag during the Boer War, and to whom we have insanely pledged our credit for 130 millions—after the said measure has been twice over rejected by the predominant partner! Also, say, old age pensions, maintaining the unemployed out of the rates, and other logical results of the silly notion that the State should penalise industry and thrift by making the industrious support the idle and thriftless—which marks the beginning of the end *à la Romaine*—free lands to chaffer with, free baths and circuses to "loaf in," and free loaves to eat without working for. There's nothing new in all this. Greece tried it and perished. Imperial Rome died of it. Australia is trying it with signal want of success, and would-be Imperial England must needs follow in her wake.

The remedies are obviously, firstly, to make our legislators as strong and independent as possible. How? By concentrating the Upper House, reducing them to fifty by the selection of

their fellow-peers, adding thereto the Heads of the leading Churches and perhaps Chairmen of County Councils, Lord Mayors, or any men representative of trade and important industries and national interests and arts (other than brewing, since that art is amply represented already)—then fill up to the required number (say 100 or 150) with life peers in nomination of Crown. Secondly, as for the Lower House—whatever system is adopted, be it plural voting or cumulative, or by colleges as in Belgium, etc., let it be indirect, so as to prevent, as far as possible, our members being the slaves of their constituents, viz. going into the Council of the Nation with their hands tied, and their votes and opinions already purchased. Finally, no member of either House should be allowed to spend any money on or in his constituency, or ply the guinea-pig trade, which would remove the curse and stain of political trading, and thereby kill the trade of politics and eliminate those who covet a seat merely to sell their M.P.-ship in the city to the highest bidder as well as that still more numerous body of candidates, who are solely elected for their suitable “plucking” properties.

Now, since these two orders of undesirables abound in both Houses, it may be fairly claimed that these two rules alone, and possibly a third besides, excluding lawyers *à la* Edward III. of blessed memory—would have a more direct influence in purifying the political quagmire than any reform that can be devised. Finally, the leader, and, perhaps, the Cabinet Ministers should be elected each session by the entire “side” of their followers.

We should then be spared the preposterous, though accustomed, scandal perpetrated *ad lib.* by the late Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour of filling the Cabinet with their friends and relations, mostly well-meaning but incompetent amateurs who, though possibly “nice young men for a small tea-party,” were scarcely the men to save the situation. Nor would the ridiculous dilemma continually recur, as last year, that the country becomes utterly disgusted with the trifling or vacillation of a Premier and is compelled to throw itself upon the opposite “party”—not from any special disgust for Unionism or Conservatism, but because there is no other course which ensures a clearance of the obnoxious Premier or Cabinet. For example—at the last election it seems certain that numberless Unionists turned to the Radicals in

despair, not because they were averse to Conservative measures, but because their only hope of shunting Mr. Balfour and his gang of incompetents lay in throwing out their party. Surely an absurd necessity to which only a patient and ass-like nation would submit! But to go farther and seek out the root evil—the same old story recurs—want of system—in short, amateurism or *dilettantism*, which is our bane in Army, Government and Law.

Our officers are as gallant a body as ever met an enemy, but they are mere amateurs.

Our statesmen are usually well-meaning and honest, but they are amateurs.

Our legislators try their best to make our laws, and fail miserably because they know no system, follow no plan, and, being amateurs, have no accurate training for their work, with the fatal result that our statutes are hotchpotch, our judgments haphazard; nothing in law is fixed, certain, or constant, and since amateur lawyers are good enough for amateur-made law, we have amateur barristers whose slipshod utterances and careless talk, show all too plainly that glibness, impudence, and deceit (or the art of “bluffing a jury”) are more common than close reasoning, accurate logic, and legal knowledge—and amateur judges, whose sole qualifications for the “bench” arise out of their talking performances in the House in defence of dubious Government measures—not unfrequently, like Lord Brougham, reach the woolsack without finding the necessity of acquiring “a little law.”

Would any but a stupid people endure the outrage of being the sport of amateur judges and lawyers who muddle and endanger their vital concerns—of an Army which costs more and does less for the money than any other—or a Government whose chief idea of the State is to afford impecunious youth an easy stepping-stone to wealth and honours?

We should be free to impose what terms we saw fit upon our Colonies, and found an Anglo-Saxon (or, more correctly, Teuto-Celtic) Federation which would suffice to feed us, and defy the world in arms. Even then there would remain the difficulty of selling our surplus manufactures when the Colonies should have attained their full industrial development.

Our principal want must always be: (1) Cheap food-stuffs for

the labouring and landless millions ; (2) Cheap and abundant raw materials, iron, coal, cotton, wood, etc.

Clearly, therefore, our aim should have been to so handle our Colonies as to make it worth their while to produce the largest amount of these articles, and to stimulate our own farmers to the highest production by a tax on foreign wheat of, say, one shilling a bushel, at the very least, which must, and would have that effect, without any appreciable rise in bread.

Adopting the only reasonable rule, viz. of taxing the foreign articles which we can ourselves produce, while letting in free (or nearly so) those we cannot, we should take off nearly all the duty on Colonial tea, coffee, chocolate, wines and spices, and charge heavy duties upon the foreign grown articles ; thus providing the working population with what is a real boon and a necessity to them, at almost prime cost. Iron, coal, cotton, and non-Colonial timber should be highly taxed : a five per cent. preferential duty levied on all partly, and ten per cent. preferential duty on all fully manufactured articles. Then, for the special purposes of public debt extinction, a super-duty, strictly graduated according to its greater or less necessity, should be put on all articles of luxury, possibly in the following order : magazines, newspapers, comic papers (*double*), theatre tickets ; Paris dresses, hats, etc. ; motors, hunters, photographs, matches, champagnes, ports, sherries, and foreign brandies and liqueurs ; Havana tobacco ; truffles and all other foreign fish, game, fruits, vegetables, and delicacies, at the same time reducing to the lowest point the duty on light clarets and hocks, as a sanitary counterpoise to native grown alcohols.

But can this be done at this hour ? Can we afford to be either honest, or logical, or even sober, without financial ruin—in view of our past extravagance and imprudence ? I greatly doubt it.

There can be no greater illusion, however, than to suppose that we can regain our waning position in the finances or commerce of the world without a new departure, a trained legislature, a trained and skilled cabinet, and a trained administration. Above all, we must mend our ways, give up our present education, in which there is no real technical training except in athletics, and abandon our easy-going *non curante* habits for a rational and well-

directed system of commercial instruction. However perfect our fiscal system, and however much we reform our administration, we cannot regain our lost ground without first reforming ourselves. We must teach our youth to be as fit to defend their land as the Swiss, to practice the self-denial and thrift of the German, to imitate the patriotism and self-sacrifice of the Japanese.

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What is, then, the conclusion to be drawn from the considerations which I have tried to place before you? That, if true, or indeed, if there be ever so little of generally admitted truth in my observations and strictures, there can be none among you that will not search his own heart to see if he, too, has no blame in these matters. If I succeed in arousing some honest pride in those whose ears must surely tingle as they peruse these lines, I am content, so they shall resolve not only in the presence of the foreigner but among their own countrymen as well, to mend their ways and refurbish their tarnished patriotism at home and abroad. Let us at once admit that we have long been the spoiled children of Europe—the privileged nation of the world, to whom the good things of the globe have come as a matter of course in right of our all-conquering Navy, and commercial supremacy, largely due to our original wealth in coal and iron stores and our early progress and inventions in steam and machinery. For well-nigh one hundred years, thanks to our encircling seas, we have not only been free to develop our own material prosperity while revolutions and desolating wars were decimating our European neighbours, but by our wealth and all-pervading trade were enabled to snap up most of “the unconsidered trifles” of the earth and defy the fast-rising jealousy and envy of the nations, until at last we have come to forget we are human and subject to the common laws of human existence. Imbued from youth with the belief that our “Constitution” is the most perfect creation of the intellect of man, and oblivious of the fact that for nearly one hundred years we have allowed each prentice-hand to tinker and hammer at it as best him seemed, we are one and all penetrated with the unquenchable conviction that our laws, our government and our institutions generally are indestructible and everlasting, that our com-

mercial and naval supremacy has been ordered from all time by a beneficent Providence as a beacon of light to the inferior nations around us, and that to Englishmen alone belong the vacant spots of the earth as an hereditary right. Softened with a long period of peace, bloated with wealth, luxury and ease, John Bull has had a severe awakening in the Boer War. His credit shaken, his financial prepotence lost, he rubs his eyes to find his costly army useless, his administration corrupt, his government paralyzed, his educational plans abortive, his criminal law discredited, his exports stationary, his "free trade" shibboleth exploded, his boasted municipalities venal and reckless, his National Debt almost at high-water mark again, diminished profits everywhere side by side with a scandalous contempt for public retrenchment on the part of politicians—in short, universal uneasiness and distrust, and "for all these ills a cure." "Our only quack, the Prophet of Birmingham," suggests a shilling duty on Corn, and Our Government a Colonial Conference! Now considering our excellent Colonial friends, while generally willing to give us a certain preference over foreigners in exchange for a free food-stuffs import, are at one in refusing to allow their own tariffs to be remodelled in our own interest, to contribute to our naval or military defence, or to enter into any system of joint Imperial representation, or, in plain English, to convert the name of Empire into a reality, it must be confessed that the prospect before us is far from encouraging.

Still, we English, unless we have greatly fallen from our high estate of bygone days, are, above all, gifted with an extraordinary power of recuperation, *Ces diables d'Anglais* (Bonaparte used to complain) *ne savent pas quand ils sont battus!* Let us take heart of grace and refuse to be beaten now; and let us show the world the spirit we displayed in the long drawn-out wars of a century ago, when we confronted a Continent in arms undismayed. We know that all nations have their ups and downs, and that it is not given to all men or all nations to bear success, while adversity, more often than not, serves but to test their metal and deploy their best qualities. Waterloo was our apogee. When the Peninsular veterans who rolled back the tide of Europe in arms at Waterloo were born, England was still a race nation of warrior freemen, helplessly inveigled into

becoming a race of mechanics and shopkeepers to quench their masters' greed. Machinery turned us into a nation of shopkeepers, and Waterloo turned our head. Since that turning point of our military glory, we have contrived to waste more money with less favourable results upon our little wars and our army than any of our neighbours, and have succeeded in squandering the splendid inheritance of success in arms which came down to us from the days of Wellington and Marlborough. There remains to us yet the untarnished, because untried, reputation of our unconquered Navy. Let us see to it that we do not rashly dissipate that as well. Let us see to it that Cant is banished from amongst us, so that Insincerity and Hypocrisy shall be no longer imputed to us alike by friend or foe. And to this end, let us strive to *be* rather than to *seem, esse quam videri*, and train our children once more, as of old, to respect their elders, to venerate the past, with all its lore and wisdom of tradition and experience, turning their young minds, as far as may be in this bustling, hustling world of to-day, from the material to the spiritual and intellectual side of existence, that they may not only strive for *personal* success but recognise a *national* destiny to be attained by collective effort. In short, let us teach them to be earnest and sincere, faithful and dutiful, patriotic and loyal to their God, their family, and their race.

THE END.

THE STATE OF TEXAS,  
COUNTY OF [unclear]

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a legal document, possibly a deed or contract, containing several paragraphs of text.]





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